

A letter to Dr. Richard Huck, on the construction and method of using vapor baths / [Thomas Denman].

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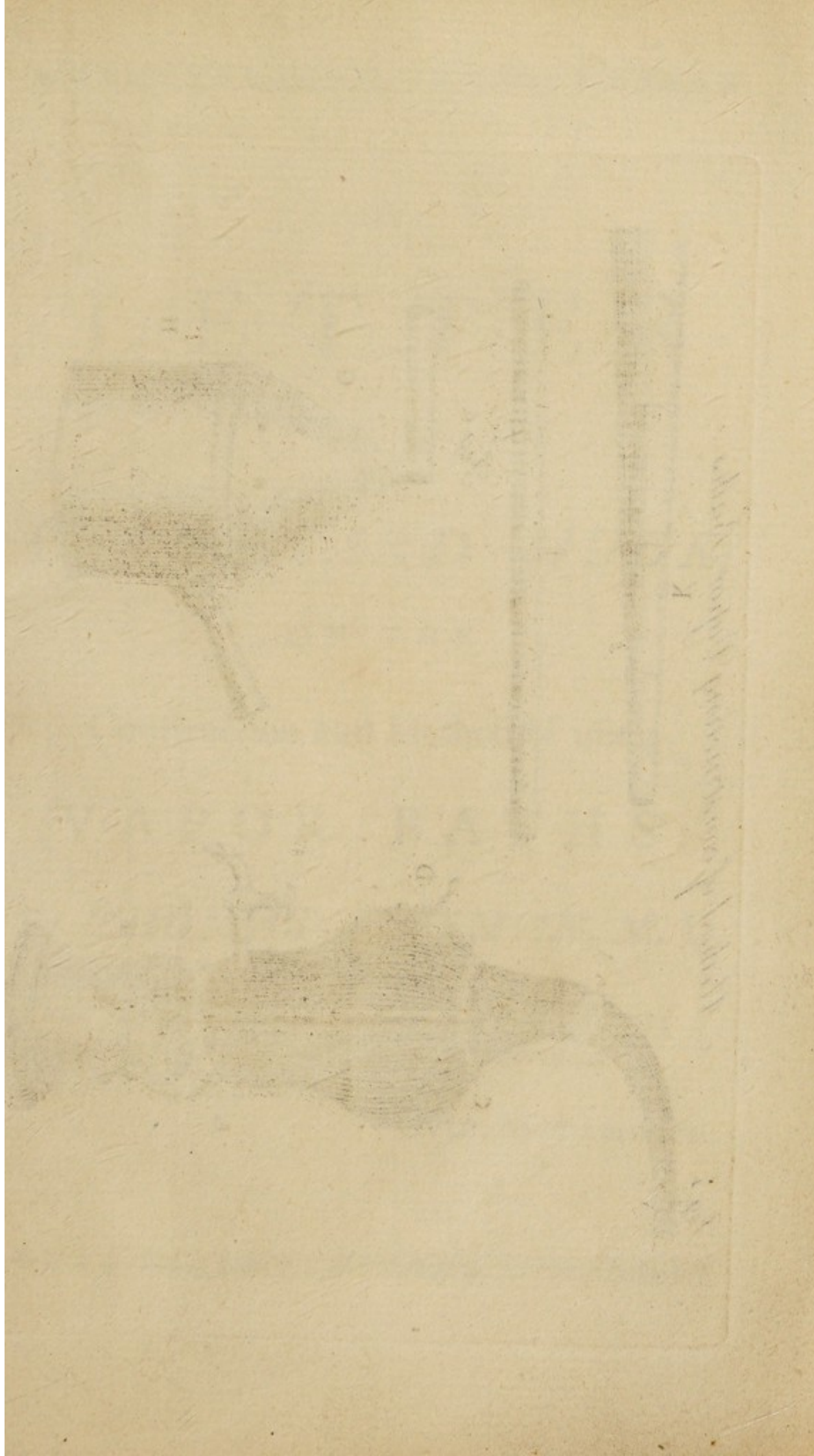


Fig. 1 Method of constructing Vapor Baths.

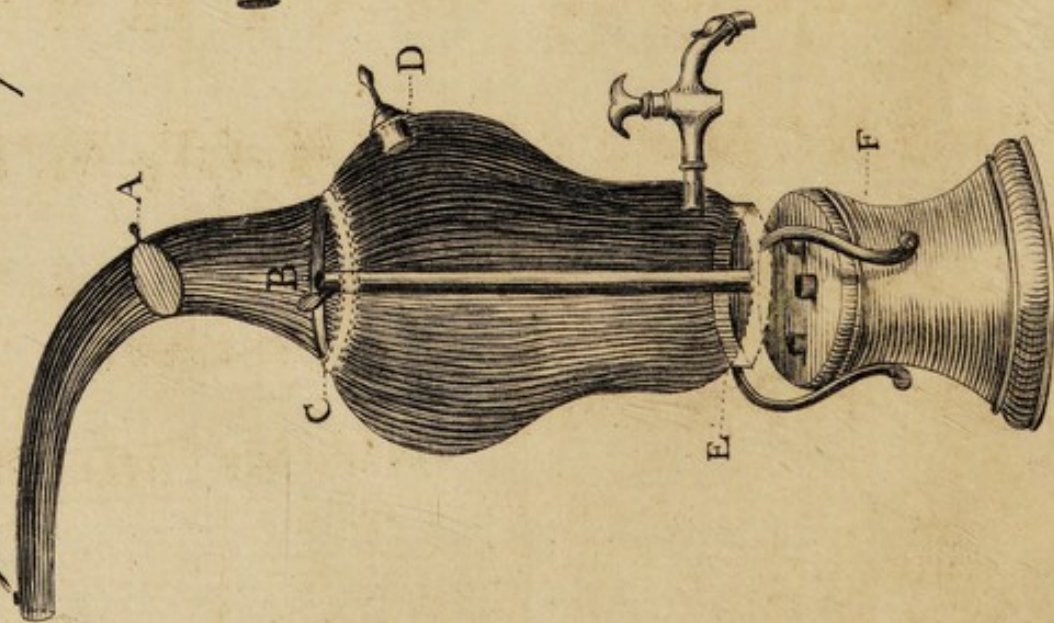
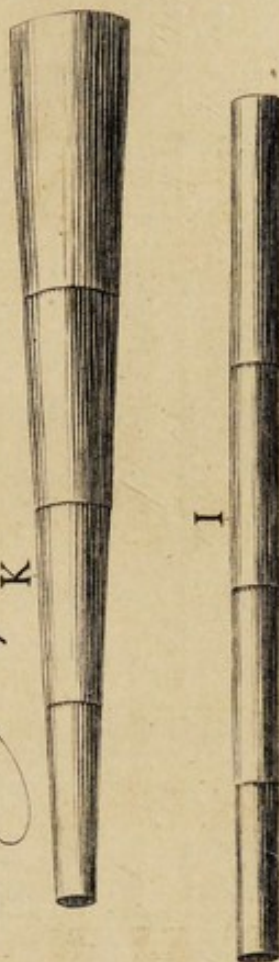
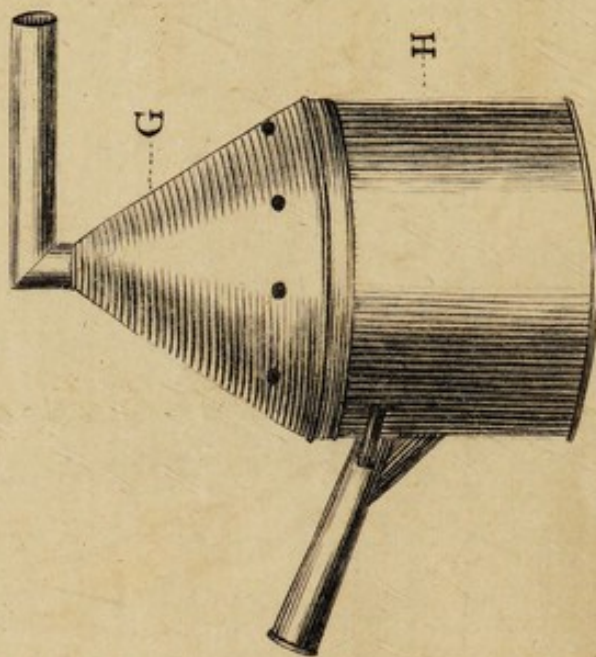
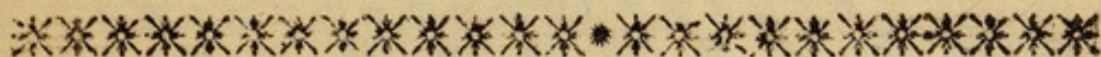


Fig. 2



S. Smith Sculp.



11.

A
L E T T E R
T O
Dr. *RICHARD HUCK*,
O N T H E
Construction and Method of using
V A P O R B A T H S :
By *THOMAS DENMAN*, M. D.

*Pulsa fugit Macies : abeunt pallorque situsque ;
Adjectoque cavæ supplentur sanguine venæ ;
Membraque luxuriant.*

OVID. METAMORPH.



LETTER

TO

DR. RICHARD HUCK,

ON THE

Constriction and Method of using

VAPOR BATHS:

By THOMAS DEWMAN, M.D.

*Prælo facit laceris: ubi et pallorque stupor;
Albidæque enee supplantant sanguine venæ;
Membraque laxantur.*

QVID. METAMORPH.

A
L E T T E R
T O

Dr. *RICHARD HUCK.*

S I R,

THE Knowledge of the Construction
and Method of using VAPOR BATHS
being confined to very few People, I
am urged by a strong Persuasion of the
good Consequences, which will follow the
more general Admission of them into Practice,
confirmed by some Experience, to publish the
following short Account of them. I address it
to you, Sir, because you have been assiduous in
finding Opportunities to ascertain the Effects of
Vapor Bathing; because I am convinced of the
Liberality of your Sentiments, and of the Eager-
ness with which you cultivate the Improvement
of the Science you profess.

MANY

MANY Objections have been made to the introduction of Vapor Baths: These have probably arisen from different Causes; but the Opinion of Difficulties, attending the Process, hath been most frequently alledged: When the contrary appears, I shall hope to see Gentlemen of the Profession availing themselves of the Advantages, which they will certainly obtain by the frequent Use of this Medicine, not only in Diseases where Fomentations do Service, but also in many others hitherto deemed incurable.

VAPOR Baths may be divided into three Kinds; first, those which convey the dry Vapor, secondly, the moist Vapor, and thirdly, those which combine the dry and moist.

THE Judgement of the Physician will be exerted in the proper Application of these separate or united, and whatever Pretences may be made, it is not in the Power of Art to draw Resources elsewhere.

THE most simple Contrivance, which answers the Purpose of conveying the different Kinds of Vapor effectually, is to be preferred.

ALL the Apparatus, which is necessary for bathing with the moist or united Vapor, is described on the Plate, and will be sufficiently explained, that the Use of the different Parts may be understood, or to give sufficient Information to the Artificer who is employed to make them.

FIG.

FIG. 1. Is a Section of a Bath made of Copper, which conveys the moist and dry Vapor united. A. A Valve, which will occasionally prevent the Ascent of both Kinds of Vapor, partly or wholly. B. A Valve to prevent the Ascent of the Vapor of the Spirit of Wine, used for the Lamp. C. The Head of the Bath. D. A Button to the Orifice, through which the medicated Liquor is poured into the Bath, or into which Air may be thrown, to make the Vapor rise in larger Quantities. E. The Body of the Bath. F. The Stand in which the Lamp is fixed.

FIG. 2. G. The Head of the Bath made of Tin, for moist Vapor only. H. The Body, which varies little from a common Kettle. I. A Cylindrical Tube made of Tin, to fix to either Bath. K. A Conical Tube for the same Purpose.

THE Tin Tubes may be made of different Dimensions, and flexible ones may be easily contrived, for particular Purposes, of Leather, or of Leather inclosing a Spiral Piece of Tin, to prevent it from collapsing.

As the Method of constructing Baths is beyond Expression easy, the following Directions for using them will be found very convenient, and are all which it is necessary to observe.

IF it is thought requisite to bath the whole Body, a Piece of Oil-Cloth is to be laid upon the inferior Bed-Clothes, and over that a Blanket, on which the Patient must lie. A Cradle, after the Fashion of that in common Use, to prevent the Disturbance of a fractured Limb by the Bed-Clothes, is necessary to allow the free Access of the Vapor to every Part of the Body. The Cradle ought to be covered with another Piece of Oil-Cloth, and over that what Bed-Clothes we choose, which must be tucked in close, especially about the Neck, to prevent the Escape of the Vapor; and thin Flannel may be thrown loosely over the Body, to avoid any Inconvenience from the immediate Heat.

A small Opening must be left at the Feet for the Admission of the Tin Tube.

No other Regulation of the Heat is necessary than what will occur to the Operator, from the Sensations of the Patient and his own Judgement.

ONE or more Lamps may be lighted according to the Quantity of Vapor we desire to raise.

IN bathing particular Parts of the Body, the same Method must be used, and even in this Case it is better that the Patient should be in Bed, as an universal Sweat is commonly brought on.

It seems better not to continue the Use of the Vapor too long, the first Time it is applied.
The

The usual Time has been about fifteen Minutes, but the moist Vapor has been continued occasionally, with Moderation, to particular Parts, for three or four Hours, after which the spontaneous Sweat which follows may be kept up at Pleasure.

THE more obstinate and deep rooted the Disease, the more gentle should be the Application of the Vapor at first Using, provided there be no imminent Danger. This I apprehend will be a good general Rule, for Reasons obvious to all.

THE Decoction from which the Vapor is raised may be medicated with Ingredients, adapted to the particular Complaint for which the Bath is used. Little more has been expected of late Years, from Fomentations of any Kind, than Warmth and Moisture. Perhaps the ancient Physicians were too scrupulously exact in distinguishing the different Qualities of Herbs, and other natural Bodies, and often deceived in their Expectations, or at least their Opinion of the Mode of Operation, in attributing to these relaxing and bracing Properties, by which they supposed Diseases were cured. I am however persuaded, that as there is an essential Difference, in every Mode of Trial, between Rosemary and Mallows for instance, their Effects will always be essentially different in the Application of them to Diseases. Indeed the contrary Opinion has not a little contributed to reduce Botany, from whence Men of Genius, in all Ages, have hoped to reap great Advantages,

Advantages, to the almost useless Footing on which it now stands.

THE dry Vapor may be loaded with the active Parts of such Medicines as are judged to be useful, by dissolving or infusing them in the Spirit used for the Lamp; or Gums and the like Substances may be mixed up with other inflammable Matter, and used in the Manner of a Fuse; which seems a preferable Method to the very awkward one in which Fumigations have been generally used.

THE following Cases, which have fallen under my own Observation, are intended to confirm the Accounts given by Mr. SYMONS, of the Effect of Vapor Bathing. It is to this very sensible and ingenious Surgeon we are indebted chiefly, for the Introduction and easy Method of using these Baths; a Knowledge which, I am informed, he has acquired with great Expence and Trouble. They are mentioned rather as Incitements to others to use this valuable Medicine, than as Guides in what Complaints it will be proper, though it may not be amiss to observe, that no bad Consequences have ever been known to follow its Use.

A Gentleman had been under the Care of a very eminent Physician in Town, for a Fever preceded by strong Rigors, and attended with a very acute Pain, extending from the Region of the Spleen to the left Groin. He had been bled very often, fomented and taken a Variety of Medicines

Medicines, but the Pain was very violent, especially upon the least Motion, though the Fever was abated. The Complaint was judged to be an Adhesion of the Colon to the Peritonæum, and it was suspected that an Abscess had formed at the Part. He was bathed twenty Minutes, the first Time, with the united Vapor, and found himself easier. The Bathing was repeated every Night and Morning, eight Times, when he was perfectly freed from the Pain, which did not return.

MANY of my Friends have used the Vapor Bath frequently, in Complaints of the Bowels, arising from different Causes, in which it has never failed to give present Ease, and has often entirely cured; nor is the Effect surprising, if we consider the speedy and powerful Manner in which it operates.

A Gentleman's Servant was suddenly seized with an acute Pain in the left Side of the Thorax. He had a high Fever, Oppression in Breathing, and a teasing Cough. Bleeding and the Medicines given did not relieve him. I applied the Vapor Bath, which eased him, but did not effect a Cure; which was indeed obtained with great Difficulty, by repeated Bleeding, and a steady Use of the most active Remedies.

VAPOR Bathing has been often used in Complaints of the Thorax. Those which are external are frequently entirely removed by it; but in the true Pleurisy and Peripneumony it seems unequal,

unequal in its Efficacy, though it generally gives some Relief.

GLANDULAR Swellings of the Throat and Jaws are often very troublesome and obstinate against the most powerful Remedies. Many Instances have occurred where the Use of the Vapor Bath has succeeded, when every other Method has failed.

A White Swelling is a Term which has been applied, with such Latitude, that no precise Idea is conveyed by it. Perhaps no two Surgeons mean the same Disease when they use it. It is well known however in Practice, that there is a Disease of the Joints, particularly of the Knee, which from the constant acute Pain, and other attendant Symptoms, is thought often to require Amputation, though on dissecting the Limb afterwards, no Signs of Disease appear, except a little Thickening of the Ligaments; perhaps none at all. Judging by Analogy, I thought it probable, that all or the greatest Part of these would be cured by the Vapor Bath, at least, if used before the Bones were affected; and I was happy to find my Conjectures were not ill founded, when you informed me, that within your own Knowledge, some extraordinary Cures of this Disease had been performed, under the Direction of a Surgeon, † no less remarkable for his Candor than Ingenuity. This Gentleman used the Steam of warm Water only, 'till the Pain was much lessened, and then a Proportion of the Ingredients for the Spirit of Salt Armoniac, by which the Tumor was removed.

To

† Mr. Wyatt, Surgeon to the *Middlesex-Hospital*.

To give particular Cases of all the Disorders where Vapor Bathing has done Service, would be an endless Task. As a Sudorific, nothing can be more powerful or speedy, witness the Cures of Dropsies, partial and general, which have been obtained by its Use. Many Diseases of the Skin would probably be removed by it. Chronical Rheumatisms, and that most troublesome and pertinacious Symptom of it, the Sciatica, Contractions and impaired Motions of Limbs after Wounds, and other violent Injuries, would generally yield to it. Many Men are discharged from His Majesty's Service, in Time of War, as unserviceable, for these Complaints, which might probably be cured; therefore Interest, as well as Humanity, should prevail with us to give it a fair Trial.

BUT there is no Disease, in which Vapor Bathing promises more desirable Effects, than in the Venereal. Experience shews that there are many Constitutions, which will not bear the Operation of Mercury, and many Symptoms, which are sooner relieved by other Means. Perhaps besides the various Symptoms, which the same Cause will produce in different Constitutions, there may be in Nature different Species of the same Kind of Virus. Mercury seems to fail more frequently in thin delicate Habits of Body, than the strong, and the former are much more subject to Eruptions of the Skin, nocturnal Pains and Exostoses. It does not stay long enough in the Habit to produce its proper Effect, and such are
in

in general so irritable, that they suffer exceedingly from the Use of it. These always receive Benefit from warm Bathing, before they are put into the mercurial Course, which can only be depended upon for an effectual Cure. Vapor Bathing is yet more speedy, and often more desirable, from our being able to apply it with less Trouble. The following Detail of its Effects upon some Symptoms may be useful.

AN Officer lately returned from *America* had been many Years ill of the Venereal Disease, for which he had scarce attempted to get a perfect Cure. He had an Exostosis of long standing, upon the Ulna of the Right Arm, nocturnal Pains, and Eruptions over the whole Head and Face. He was Vapor Bathed for three successive Nights, and took fifteen Grains of *Dover's* Powder at Bed-Time. The Pains were abated, and the Eruptions began to scale. I put him upon a Course of Mercurial Ointment. The Exostosis not receding, this was partially bathed twice every Day, and in a Fortnight was entirely gone. The Ointment was persisted in, 'till he had used six Ounces, when he was well.

I have tried it once with Success in an Exostosis, which remained after a Course of Mercury; but the Patient was immediately put upon the same Regimen, as if no Steps had been taken to remove the Infection.

PHYMOSES are often exceedingly troublesome, and attended with bad Consequences by concealing

cealing Chancres. The Cure obtained by flitting the Præpuce is often as troublesome as the Disease.

A young Man applied to me who had a Phymosis. I should have guessed from the Appearance, that it would have required six or seven Days to relax it. I applied the Bath, and finding the Constriction beginning to give way, I continued it for three Hours, when I was able to withdraw the Præpuce entirely, and dress the Chancres, which were very numerous upon the Corona Glandis. A considerable Tightness returned for three or four Days, but it always yielded to a short Application of the Bath.

BUBOES are sometimes of so indolent a Nature that they will neither suppurate or disperse; one of long standing was entirely removed by the Bath, though it required a longer Continuance of its Use, than any Case in which I have tried it.

VAPOR Bathing has been used for the Hernia Humoralis, as it is called, and apparently with superior Advantage to Fomentations.

PROBABLY the Number of incurable Symptoms, in this Disease, would be much lessened by the prudent Use of the Vapor Bath; such as Tumors on the Testicles, Distortion of the Penis, Nodes, and all other Kinds of Tumors; the Fixing of the Jaw, Diseases of the Prostate Gland, &c.

EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENCE proves the Advantages of Vapor Baths, nor is it difficult to conceive that the Steam of warm Water should be much more subtle and penetrating than Water itself. It seems to have the Properties of a Fluid of an intermediate Nature, between Water and Air. But accounting for the Mode of Operation is no Part of the present Design, as I do not esteem it absolutely necessary to adapt the Effects of Vapor Bathing to any Hypothesis, provided the Facts be ascertained; though Arguments might probably be hence adduced, to prove satisfactorily that Diseases proceed, according to the Doctrine of different Systematic Writers, either from too strict or too lax Fibres, from Spasm, or from a Defect or Redundancy of Electric Fire.

I am,

With the most affectionate Esteem,

Dear S I R,

Your obliged humble Servant,

London, Oct. 29, 1768.

Thomas Denman.

