

The wonder of wonders, or, A True and Perfect Narrative of a Woman near Guildford in Surrey, who was Delivered lately of Seventeen Rabbets, and Three Legs of a Tabby Cat, &c.; In a Letter from a Gentleman at Guildford, to his Friend a Physician in Ipswich, Suffolk. With Remarks upon the same by Way of answer. To which is added, an Abstract of a Letter from Mr. Howard, who was the Man-Midwife that Deliver'd her.

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or

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Mira quidem, non ficta tamen.

Ipswich:

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1726.

History of the

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It has not yet been determined whether the
present position of the country is to be
left to the hands of the people or whether
it should be placed under the management
of a government. The question is a
very important one and one which
will have to be decided in the near future.
The people have a right to know the
truth and to be able to make their
own choice.

The present position of the country is
very unsatisfactory. The people are
suffering from the effects of the
war and the government is not doing
enough to help them. The people
are tired of the war and they want
to see the country restored to its
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From a gentleman at Guildford, to his
friend a physician in Ipswich, Suffolk.

I am going to write to you an account, which I desire you would not believe to be the less true, tho' so very strange and wonderful; therefore I shall make no apology for this letter. There is a poor woman now living in Godalmin, who when she was about five weeks gone, saw two rabbits come into a field, where she was a weeding, (the one black the other gray) which she and her companions ran after but could not catch. In hopping season (which is with us in August) going home from work, she had something came from her, which the surgeon, (who is likewise a man-midwife) by her description judged to have been a mola. In her one and thirtieth week, on the 27 of September, the liver of a rabbit came from her, which her husband brought to Mr Howard the abovementioned surgeon, but he thinking it a trick designed to be put upon him, refused to go; her husband came again the next day, and then brought with him all the breast of a rabbit, with the heart between the two lobes of the lungs, hanging on the outside near the neck. He then went, and there came from her on several days three legs of a cat of a tabby colour, and one of a rabbit; the guts were as a cat's, and in them three pieces of the back bone of an eel: the thorax was empty; the skin with the fleck came likewise from her by pieces, which gave her most pain; when all was discharged, it looked like a cased rabbit; the bones, tho' hard, were broke in coming away; but no one piece without the help of the man-midwife. The cats feet, we may suppose were formed in her imagination from a cat she was so fond of, as to let it lye on the bed by her a nights. She was so well as to go to church on Friday the 28. Inst, to return thanks for her recovery. The Sunday following she was taken ill again, and the next day there was brought from her another rabbit, but by piece meal, about the bigness of a store rabbit, the first being about half grown; since that several others, and but last night she was delivered of the tenth: They have been of different sizes, and different colours, all

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their bones broken, but no more cat's feet. I shall only add an acc^t of her delivery of the ninth rabbit, which I had from the mouth of another eminent surgeon, who went to see this wonder of wonders, viz. on Sunday last he went and could plainly perceive something move within her, sometimes on one side, and sometimes on t^other, sometimes higher; and sometimes lower, the woman in no pain: about 12 or 14 hours after she first perceived this moving, she fell into violent pains so that five or six women were necessary to hold her: her stomach was under a very great contraction, her belly, in straining to get up what was in her, swelled so, that you would have thought her very bowels would have come out; then came away the head of a rabbit, with its eyes, ears and teeth, and the skin on, then the two forelegs, then the hind legs, after them the back part, then the forepart, and after all, the skin of a dun colour, with all the bones broken as the former were. He is of opinion she endured greater pains than in child bearing. There are a great many more particulars, which I have not skill enough in midwifery to describe; but there is a diary kept of the whole, to be communicated to the world in due time. The whole is so publick, and both the surgeons of such undoubted reputation and judgement in their business that there is not the least room to question the truth of it. If this can draw an answer from you, I shall be glad to hear your thoughts thereof, who am, Sir,
Your most humble servant, &c.

Guilford, Nov. 9. 1726.

NB. That since the date of this letter, the woman has been delivered of four more perfect rabbits.

Remarks by way of answer.

Sir.

Though the foregoing relation is attended with such astonishing circumstances as may well shock the belief of the present age, and prove incredible to posterity; yet it may be considered, that though this history may stand the foremost of its kind, yet seems not altogether impossible, since we meet with instances of monstrous births, as well as numerous, in almost all ages of physick; as particularly attested as this, and perhaps as much unsuspected matter of fact. That the imagination has a

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most prevailing power in conception, and that it sets and im-
prints upon the infant the characters of the thing conceived, is
what is readily granted, considering how common a thing it
is for the mother to mark the child with strawberries, mulber-
ries, clover, or any thing else, from the most trifling accident,
and, that even in the latter ripening months after the infant is
entirely formed. Of which there is an eminent instance in a young
gentleman of quality in this county (with whom I have the ho-
nor to be acquainted) who has the marks of the fleck of a
hare impressed on him by his mother when with child
with him, by her being surprized with the sudden sight of
that animal. This seems to be confirmed by Moses, even
in brute animals; because he tells us, that Jacob increased
and speckled his flocks given him by Laban, by putting rods
(the bark peeled off) finely streaked with white and green,
in the places where they used to drink, at the time of their
engendering, that the ideas formed in the conception should
be presently impressed upon the foetus. Among several his-
tories of profane authors, I shall name you only one, vouch-
ed by Bellanger, the French Kings surgeon, who was at eye
witness of a monster born near Fontainebleau, with the head
of a frog (in all other parts perfectly human) which came
from the mother holding a live frog in her hand, in a burn-
ing fever.

As for those women that have brought forth many children
at a birth, historians of good credit are not silent. Picus Mi-
randola tells you of an Italian lady in his time, that had
twenty children at two births; and Martin Cromer men-
tions a polish countess that had no less than 35 at one
birth.

But that which goes beyond all, is the well known story of
the countess Margaret, daughter to an earl of Holland, who
brought forth at once 365 children; The basins in which they
were baptized are to be seen by all strangers, as one of the
greatest curiosities in Holland, at the village church of
Losdun, not far from the Hague. And now we are in that
country, tis past all dispute, as well amongst the learn-
ed as unlearned, that the births there, are attended with

a monstrous little animal called the Surger (or Sootherkin)⁹ described at large by Levinus Lemnius, an eminent professor of that country: and that this is so common a thing among the seafaring and ordinary people, that scarce one in three, escapes this strange appearance, insomuch that the good women expect the Surger as much as the child itself, and make provision accordingly.

But to come nearer the purpose, if you look but into Schenkius, an author of great reputation, you will find instances of women delivered not only of Molas with life (as this woman was before the coming away of the rabbits) but even of several living creatures, such as cats, dogs, molas, rabbits, leverets, and mice, of some of these, several together; and others at intervals, like your subject; a great variety of which are transcribed with great exactness from Lysostenes, Ludovicus Vives, Pieræus, and others; not to mention that curious relation of Caspar Bauhine, of a woman in Switzerland who brought forth a boy and two living serpents; than which stupendous fact, nothing can possibly be better attested.

To conclude, as this story from Guildford has as yet something as monstrous in it to the belief of the reader as the births themselves, yet as the fact is now searching into by royal authority and will be speedily published by better hands, we may reasonably suspend our condemning it as a falsehood, till we receive a further information, which is coming out (by way of Diary) of the whole transaction.

Ipswich, 20th Nov. 1726

Yours, &c

An abstract of the letter from Mr Howard, the
Mannmidwife and surgeon at Guildford, dated
Nov. 22th 1726

On Sunday last came hither Mr. Ahlers, surgeon to the Kings household (by his Majesty's order) who took part of the 16th rabbit from this poor woman, and carried it to the King at Kensington. He was to have stayed

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till all was over, but being taken ill, was obliged to return
the same night. The Tuesday before, I had Mr S Andre, his
Majestys anatomist with me, by the Kings order likewise;
who took part of one rabbit from her which weighed 22
ounces; and these gentlemen were both fully satisfied
with the truth of this wonderful delivery: as was also
Mr Molincaux, secretary to the Prince, who was here
also; and these gentlemen as I am informed, have
all made their reports of these facts to the King and
Prince. This morning I delivered the woman of the
17th rabbit, which, I believe may be the last.

FINIS.

