

III. *A Letter from Dr. William Musgrave,
Fellow of the Coll. of Phys. and R. S. to Dr.
Sloane, concerning a Periodical Palsy.*

A *Periodical Palsy*, you will allow, is a very unusual Distemper, I do not remember either from Books or Men, to have met with more than Two Instances of it. The *German Ephemerides* (Dec. 1. Annis 9. & 10. iterumque Dec. 2. A. 3.) mention a young Man in the Dutchy of *Wirtenburg*, who, for the Space of Twelve Years, spoke only One Hour in the Four and Twenty; and that always at the same time, *viz.* between Twelve and One of the Day. The other Instance has fallen within my own Observation: Being well acquainted with the Particulars of it, I will Report it to you:

I was in *August*, 1687. desired, by a poor Woman at *Astrop-Wells*, to look on her Daughter. They both came from *Stow* in *Glocestershire* (as they had often done) for Work. The Daughter was about Twenty One, of a Sanguin Complexion; and, as to private Matters, well enough: She had been for several Days less Active than usual; and after that, had (a Week before I saw her) lost her Speech, and the Use of her Legs: She reel'd like a Person Drunk, and was (by those who knew not her Condition) often taken to be so; but, I think, unjustly; for she had neither Money nor Interest to make her so. In her Legs there was little or no Sense of Feeling; her Left Leg was drawn up as in a violent Cramp.

Her Ruddy Sanguin Look directed Bleeding; but that did not relieve her. I then gave her Spirit of *Sal Armon.* Succinated, Steel with *Gentian*, *Amber*, *Castor*, and other warm *Cephalics*. A Blister was laid on her

Neck. A Bath (of Wormwood, and other hot Herbs) prepared for her Legs; *Ung. Martiatum* used to anoint them after Bathing.

By these Means, she was, in the Space of Three Days, able to speak again; and in a little time, by the Help of Crutches, able to go. But then omitting the Medicines, tho' but one Day, lost her Speech again; and, returning to them (especially the Spirit) recovered it as soon.

When not able to speak, she had a manifest Alteration in her Face; the Strength and Tonick Vigour of it abated; her Eyes grew Dull, her Lips Pale. I have in this Juncture given her Thirty Drops of the Spirit: In the Space of Two Hours the Change has been surprising; her Eye has quickened, a Colour come over her Face, her Speech return'd.

In *July*, 1688. I was again at *Althrop*; whither the Mother (encouraged by the Success of the last Year's Physick) brought her Daughter to me, and gave me the following Account of her, *viz.* That after the Physick I had (the Year before) prescribed her, was all spent; Her Speech, and the Use of her Legs left her; first in *September*, 1687. particularly on a *Tuesday*, about Noon; that it return'd the *Saturday* following, near the same Hour: and that from *Michaelmas*, 1687. to the time of our Discourse (which was on *July* 18 following) her Speech and Strength of Legs observed the same Period (of going off on *Tuesdays* every Week, and returning on *Saturdays*) with only Two Exceptions, *viz.* That once they returned on a *Friday*, another time not before *Sunday*.

She tells me, That her Daughter was, the preceding Winter, very Weak, and in Danger of Death; That her Appetite was much abated; That she sometimes chose to eat Bread, Water, and Salt, boy'd together; That
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now, as the Summer came on, she recovered some Degree of Strength ; That she had lost no Sense at any Time, besides that of Feeling ; which was by the first quantity of Medicines, restored effectually, and without Relapse.

I understand from her, That the *Menses* were regular, as to Period ; but as to Quantity unequal ; with this farther Observable, That when they were most, she (the Daughter) was worst.

I was inform'd also, That before her Speech used to go off, she constantly lost, for an Hour's Space, the Use of her Left Arm ; That when her Speech was leaving her, she would stammer out some few Words, and after this, on a sudden, became Mute : That when, not able to speak, she often moan'd, and made a melancholly, complaining Noise : That, her Speech did use to return (as it went off) all on a sudden, and at once.

She always had, as her Speech ceas'd, and Two Hours after it was gone, a pain in her Left Side, including Arm and Leg : Her left Foot was then Drawn up, as before-mentioned : Her Face was high colour'd when she lost her Speech, pale when it return'd : No part of her Body wither'd, but she whole ; was generally cold.

Some time before she was at first struck Speechless, her Hands used to Tremble, but have been of late more steady : Nor was she now so Dull and Heavy as formerly ; but for the generality more Brisk and Cheerful than in her State of Health.

When she has her Speech she goes best ; but is always forc'd to use a Stick, being never able to go steadily : She speaks by Intervals, as distinctly as ever, and as loud ; can sing, when capable of speaking ; but at no other time.

This Account the Mother gives me of her Daughter, delivering it with a great deal of Country Simplicity; which recommended what she said. As to her self, I found she sometimes had convulsive Fits; and tho' a poor labouring Woman, was extremely Hysterical.

I at the same time observ'd the Daughter, to have a pale sickly Look; a heavy Eye, a low Pulse; and to be much wasted in Flesh. She continued in my Neighbourhood about Two Months. Curiosity (as well as Charity) prompted me to see her often. I did see her almost every Day for the whole time. I made both Mother and Daughter frequently repeat to me, the manner of the Fits, and (by cross Interrogatories) endeavoured to catch them in differing Stories: But their Accounts were, in Substance always the same. I endeavour'd to discover some Matter of Fact, which might disprove them; and to that Intent examin'd those who were near them: But could light on no such Instance.

I then repeated the former Course, furnishing her with large Quantities of her old Medicines; and so dismiss'd her, with Orders to let me hear again from her, when the Physick should be all spent.

In *September*, 1688. she came (with her Mother) from *Stow* to *Oxon*, (that is almost Twenty Miles) on Foot; thank'd me for what I had directed her, and beg'd a farther Supply of Medicines. She accordingly had them, and by the 10th of *Nov.* following, was grown strong, and to all Appearance, well as ever.

For Two Months then, last past, she did go and speak every Day, but not at all times of the Week; for her Speech left her (as formerly) on *Tuesdays*; but (now) return'd the next Day after Noon. Thus she continued to the Summer following; not speaking (in more than Twenty Months) on any one *Wednesday* Morning.

In the Summer, 1689. hoping to compleat the Cure, I procured (by means of a Contribution made on purpose) for her, a large Stock of Medicines for the Winter following: but since that Summer have heard nothing more of her.

There were several Opinions concerning this young Woman; some (you will easily imagin) thought her Bewitch'd; others, that she counterfeited: But the Favourers of one and the other of these Opinions, were equally Strangers to her Case.

Can it be supposed that a Girl of very ordinary Understanding (as indeed this was) and a Rustick Education, should leave a Course of Living tolerably well, and (to the great Prejudice of her Health, and Danger of her Life) carry on, for the Space of Two Years, a Humour which depriv'd her of so much Conversation, and brought both her, and her Mother, to such excessive Hardships and Necessities, extraordinary? Choose, at the same time to take vast Quantities of Physick (for such she was seen to take) gain Ground under the Use of that Physick; and in Proportion to it, lose that Ground again, upon omitting; regain it upon resuming her Physick; and this evidently, manifestly, and frequently, and yet all this while Dissemble? Sir, I beg leave to say, I think it was not in her Power so to do.

Indeed Credulity argues Weakness of Mind; and is, deservedly attended with Reproach. It is offensive to Philosophy; whose venerable Records it interlines with false Stories, and idle Tales. But on the other Hand, 'tis also true, that Scepticism is not less a Fault; for that alone renders the whole Book of Nature insignificant. What can the clearest Experiment, or the best discovery import to him, who will not hear, who will not see?

Exon, June 4. 1698.