

LIV. *An Account of the Case of a Man who died of the Effects of the Fire at Eddy-stone Light-house. By Mr. Edward Spry, Surgeon at Plymouth.*

Read Feb. 5, 1755. **O**N thursday the fourth of December, 1755, at three in the afternoon, Henry Hall, of East-stone-house, near Plymouth, aged 94 years, of a good constitution, and extremely active for one of that age, being one of the three unfortunate men, who suffered by the fire of the light-house at Eddy-stone, nine miles from Plymouth, having been greatly hurt by that accident, with much difficulty returned to his own house. I being sent for to his assistance found him in his bed, complaining of extreme pains all over his body; especially in his left side, below the short ribs, in the breast, mouth and throat. He said likewise, as well as he could, with a hoarse voice, scarce to be heard, that melted lead had run down his throat into his body.

Having taken the proper care of his right leg, which was much bruised and cut on the tibia, I examined his body, and found it all cover'd with livid spots and blisters; and the left side of the head and face, with the eye, extremely burnt; which having washed with linnen dipt in an emollient fomentation, and having applied things used in cases of burning, I then inspected his throat, the root of his tongue, and the parts contiguous, as the uvula, tonsils, &c. which were greatly scorched by

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the melted lead. Upon this I ordered him to drink frequently of water-gruel or some such draught ; and returning to my own house, sent him the oily mixture, of which he took often two or three spoonfuls.

The next day he was much worse, all the symptoms of his case being heightened, with a weak pulse ; and he could now scarce swallow at all.

The day following there was no change, except that, on account of his too great costiveness, he took six drachms of manna dissolved in an ounce and half of infusion of fenna, which had no effect till the day following ; when just as a clyster was going to be administered, he had a very fetid discharge by stool.

That day he was better till night, when he grew very feverish.

The next day, having slept well the preceding night, and thrown up by coughing a little matter, he was much better.

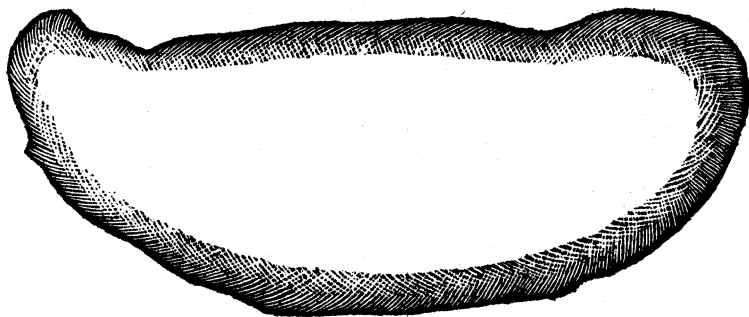
He began now to speak with less difficulty, and for three or four days to recover gradually ; but then suddenly grew worse ; his pulse being very weak : his side, which grew worse daily from the first, now reddened a little and swelled ; to which I applied the emplaster of gums. But all methods proved ineffectual, for the next day being seiz'd with cold sweats and spasms in the tendons, he soon expired.

Examining the body, and making an incision thro' the left abdomen, I found the diaphragmatic upper mouth of the stomach greatly inflamed and ulcerated, and the tunica in the lower part of the stomach burnt ; and from the great cavity of it took out a great piece of lead of the shape and weight here described.

It will perhaps be thought difficult to explain the manner, by which the lead entered the stomach : But the account, which the deceased gave me and others, was, that as he was endeavouring to extinguish the flames, which were at a considerable height over his head, the lead of the lanthorn being melted dropped down, before he was aware of it, with great force into his mouth then lifted up and open, and that in such a quantity, as to cover not only his face, but all his clothes.

Plymouth,
19 Dec. 1755.

The figure of the lead, which weighed exactly seven ounces, five drachms, and eighteen grains.



To the Right Hon. George Earl of Mac-
clesfield, President of the Royal Society.

My Lord, Plymouth, Jan. 30, 1756.

Read Feb. 5,
1756.

AS the late case I took the liberty of troubling your lordship with, was so very singular, as to make it by some gentlemen greatly doubted, on account of their imagining, that the degree of heat in melted lead was too great to be borne in the stomach, without immediate death, or at least much more sudden than happened in this case; I herein can not only convince your lordship of its fact, by my own and (if requisite) the oaths of others, but also by the following experiments, which from similitarity of circumstances must not only render that probable, but (in the most convincing manner) the absolute possibility of my assertion.

I extracted in three pieces, from the stomach of a small dog, six drachms one scruple of lead, which I had pour'd down his throat the day before.

N.B. The mucous lining of the œsophagus seemed very viscid, and the stomach much corrugated, tho' its internal coat was no-ways excoriated.

The dog had nothing to eat or drink after; nor for twenty-four hours before the experiment, when, being very brisk, I killed him.

I also took from the stomach of a large dog (in several pieces) six ounces and two drachms of lead, three days after thrown in.

The pharynx and cardiac orifice of the stomach were a little inflamed and excoriated; but the œsophagus and stomach seemed in no manner affected.

I gave this dog an half pint of milk just before I poured down the lead; very soon after which also he eat thereof freely, as if nothing ailed him; which he daily continued to do, being very lively at the time I killed him.

From the crop of a full grown fowl, I (in company with Dr. Huxham, F. R. S.) extracted of lead one solid piece, weighing two ounces and a half, together with nine other small portions, weighing half an ounce, which lead was thrown down the fowl's throat twenty-five hours before.

The fowl was kept without meat for twenty-four hours, before and after the experiment, eating (being very lively just before we killed him) dry barley, as fast, and with nigh, if not quite, the same ease as before.

The mucus on the larynx and œsophagus was somewhat hardened.

The external coat of the crop appeared in a very small degree livid; and the internal, somewhat corrugated.

The barley was partly in the œsophagus, tho' mostly in the crop, which was almost full with the lead.

I took two ounces one scruple from the crop of another fowl, three days after the experiment, which fowl was very brisk to the last.

Allowing, for a further satisfaction, that the experiment be tried, it is requisite in making thereof, that the melted lead be poured into a funnel, whose spout being as large as the throat of the animal
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(whose neck must be kept firmly erect) will conveniently admit of, must be forced down the œsophagus, somewhat below the larynx, lest any of the lead might fall therein; and according to the quantity, either by totally, or partly obstructing the aspera arteria, cause immediate, or a lingering death; which accidents happening, in my first experiments on two dogs, directed me to proceed in the above manner.

At present, I have a dog with lead in his stomach, which I intend to keep, to prove how long he may live.

My lord, your lordship may depend on it, that so far from my asserting any thing in the least degree uncertain, that, as I always have, I always shall act with so much circumspection and integrity (especially in these tender points, where my character is at stake) as to be able easily to prove what I may assert, as in the present case, so very extraordinary, that scarce any of the faculty (unless particularly acquainted with me) would give credit to, till I demonstrated it by the above experiments; which, I doubt not in the least, will be sufficiently satisfactory to your lordship, and to the honourable Society; to serve which venerable body, as much as lies in my power, will, at all times, give the greatest pleasure to,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

and most humble servant,

Edmund Spry.

A Letter of John Huxham, M. D. F. R. S. to Mr. William Watson, F. R. S. concerning the Case of the Man, who swallowed melted Lead.

Dear Sir,

Read Feb. 5,
1756.

I Think there are few things remarkable, in art or nature, in this part of the country, that do not, sooner or later, come to my knowledge. Our worthy commissioner, Fred. Rogers, Esq; sent me the lead you mention, three days after it was said to be taken out of the man (Hall) who was said to have swallowed it. I immediately sent for Mr. Edward Spry, an ingenious young surgeon, of this town, who attended this Hall during his illness, and extracted the lead from his stomach (as was reported) when dead. Mr. Spry solemnly assured me, that he did actually take the lead, that was sent me, out of the man's stomach, and offered to make oath of it. This Hall lived twelve days after the accident happened, and swallowed several things, solid and liquid, during that time; and he spoke tolerably plain, tho' his voice was very hoarse. And he constantly affirmed, that he had swallowed melted lead.

However, as the story seemed very extraordinary, and not a little improbable, I did not chuse to transmit any account of it to the Royal Society, as I could have wished for more unexceptionable evidence; for Mr. Spry had no one with him, when he did extract the lead, but one woman, Philips, the daughter of Hall, and another woman, who were also in the house, not being able, as said, to see the operation, but immediately called in after it, and Mr. Spry shewed them the lead. I sent a very sensible gentleman

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to enquire into this affair, and he had this account from them.

This Mr. Spry is, to the best of my knowledge, a person of veracity, and I think would not utter an untruth. But, what is more, last Wednesday he brought me a live young cock, into the crop or craw of which, he had the day before poured somewhat more than three ounces of melted lead. The cock indeed seemed dull, but very readily pecked and swallowed several barley-corns, that were thrown to him. I had the cock killed and opened in my view, and in the crop we found a lump of lead weighing three ounces (less twenty grains), and some other little bits of lead. I make no doubt the cock would have lived several days longer, if it had not been then killed. There seemed a slight eschar in the cock's mouth, occasioned by the melted lead, and the crop seemed as if parboiled. This experiment is very easily made, and seems to confirm the probability of Mr. Spry's account.

I never dispute a matter of fact, when I am fully convinced, that it is so; but I think it my duty to enquire narrowly into the circumstances of it, before I admit it as such. With respect to the present case, you now know as much of it as,

Dear Sir,

Plym. Sat. even.
Jan. 31, 1756.

Your most faithful and

obedient humble servant,

J. Huxham.