

An Extract of a Letter of July 28, 1675. by Mr. Lister from York to the Publisher; containing some Observations about Damps, together with some Relations concerning odd Worms vomited by Children, &c.

SIR,

I Shall Transcribe for you a Letter, I had very lately from Mr. Jessop; which is as followeth:

As to what concerneth *Damps*, I shall give you a brief account of what is generally said and believed. If you find any thing worth a further enquiry, if you please to send your *Queries*, I will endeavour to get the best information I can. There are four sorts common in these parts.

The first is the *Ordinary Sort*, of which I need not say much, being known every where; the external signs of its approach are the Candles burning orbicular, and the flames lessening by degrees until it quite extinguish; the internal, shortness of breath. I never heard of any great inconvenience, which any one suffer'd by it, who escaped swooning. Those that swoon away, and escape an absolute suffocation, are at their first recovery tormented with violent Convulsions, the pain whereof, when they begin to recover their senses, causeth them to roar exceedingly. The ordinary remedy is to dig a hole in the earth, and lay them on their bellies, with their mouths in it; if that fail, they tun them full of good Ale; but if that fail, they conclude them desperate. I have known some, who have been recovered after this manner (when some of their Companions at the same time have died) that told me, they found themselves very well within a little while after they had recovered their senses, and never after found themselves the worse for it.

They call the second sort the *Pease-bloom Damp*, because, as they say, it smells like Pease-bloom. They tell me, it alwayes comes in the Summer time, and those Groves are not free, which are never troubled with any other sort of Damps. I never heard that it was mortal, the scent perhaps freeing them from the danger of a surprise: But by reason of it, many good Groves lie idle at the best and most profitable time of the year, when the subterra-

Subterraneous waters are at the lowest. They fancy, it proceeds from the multitude of Red *Trifoil-flowers*, by them called *Honey-suckles*, which with the Limestone Meadows in the *Peake* do much abound. Sr. *W. Petty's* duplicate proportion

† See this Discourse of this Subject, printed by Mr. *Martin*, 1674. † might perhaps render this scent sensible at a great distance, especially in a narrow Cavern, but scarcely intolerable, or as they

find it, malignant.

The third is the strangest and most Pestilential of any, if all be true which is said concerning it. Those who pretend to have seen it (for it is visible) describe it thus: In the highest part of the roof of those passages, which branch out from the main Grove, they often see a round thing hanging, about the bigness of a Foot-ball, covered with a skin of the thickness and colour of a *Cobweb*: This, they say, if by any accident, as the splinter of a Stone, or the like, it be broken, immediately disperseth it self, and suffocates all the company. Therefore to prevent casualties, as soon as they have espied it, they say, they have a way, by the help of a stick and a long roap of breaking it at a distance; which done, they purifie the place well by fire before they dare enter it again. I dare not avouch the truth of this story in all its circumstances, because the proof of it seems impossible, since they say, it kills all that are likely to bear witness to all the particulars: Neither dare I deny, but such a thing may have been seen hanging on the roof, since I have heard many affirm it. Perhaps the general Tradition they have amongst them, hath made them ascribe all strange and surprising effects unto this cause. They are not without a reason for it, which is not altogether irrational, if the matter of fact be true; for they say, the steam which arises from their bodies and the candles, ascends unto the highest part of the Vault, and there condenseth, and in time hath a filme grows round about it, and at length corrupting becomes pestilential: Thus have I heard many of our under-ground Philosophers discourse.

The fourth which they also call a Damp (although how properly, I will not now argue) is that vapour, which being touched by their Candle presently takes fire and giving a crack like a Gun produceth the like effects, or rather those of Lightning. A Fellow, they commonly call *Dobby Leech*, is at this day a sad example of the force of one of those blasts in *Hasleberg-hills*, having
his

his arms and legs broken, and his body strangely distorted. Capt. *Wain* told me, he saw one of them in a Bloomery near *Peniston*. But I shall say no more of them, because I have just now such an opportunity of informing my self about this matter, as I am never like to have again as long as I live. For at *Wingersworth*, two miles beyond *Chesterfield*, within this month or five weeks, a Cole-pit of Sr. *F. Humblocks* hath been fired four times by this vapour, and hath hurt four several Men. I will not send you the particulars, because I intend to send you them, when I can do it of mine own knowledge; also I received a Relation of it from those who spoke with some of the wounded Men. I pray you furnish me with *Queries* upon this Subject; for it being an accident common to all Countries, although not very often happening in any one, I should be very glad to make the best improvement I could of my present opportunity. —

—— I give you two other Relations, which seem to me not common.

A Girl in *Sheffield* about eight months old was surprized with violent vomiting Fits, which held her for about a week, and made her so weak, that her Parents began to despair of her recovery. They at length sent for Mr. *Fisher*, who chanced amongst other things to say, *Worm-wood* was good for the Stomach. He going home to fetch things proper on that occasion, they in the mean time offer'd her some Wormwood-Ale, which she took so greedily, that she swallowed down a pint of it. Mr. *Fisher* at his return found her vomiting, and she vomited up in his presence three *Hexapodes*, of this bigness and shape; (See Fig. 2.) all very active and nimble. The Girl in a short time recovered, and was well. Mr. *Fisher* in the afternoon brought the *Hexapodes* to me; we killed one of them with trying Experiments upon it. I remembring, I had seen some very like them, which devoured the skins of such Birds as I kept dried for Mr. *Willoughby*, I gave either of the surviving *Hexapodes* the head of a shining *Atricapella*, which in about five weeks time they eat up, bones, feathers and all, except the extremities of the feathers and the beaks. I desiring to see, what

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they

they would turn into, gave them a piece of *Larus*, but that, it seems, agreed not so well with them, for they died within two daies.

I have often been puzzled to give an account of those *Phænomena*, which are commonly called *Fairy-Circles*; I have seen many of them, and those of two sorts, one sort *bare*, of seven or eight yards diameter, making a round path something more than a foot broad, with green grass in the middle; the others like them, but of several bignesses, and encompassed with a circumference of grass, about the same breadth, much *fresher* and greener than that in the middle. But my worthy Friend Mr. *Walker*, a Man not only eminent for his skill in *Geometry*, but in all other Accomplishments, gave me full satisfaction from his own Experience. It was his chance one day, to walk out amongst some Mowing-grass (in which he had been but a little while before,) after a great storm of Thunder and Lightning, which seemed by the noise and flashes to have been very near him. He presently observed a round Circle, of about four or five yards diameter, the rim whereof was about a foot broad, newly burnt bare, as the colour and brittleness of the Grass-roots did plainly testify. He knew not what to ascribe it unto but the Lightning, which, besides the odd *capricious* remarkable in that fire in particular, might without any wonder, like all other Fires, move round, and burn more in the extremities than the middle. After the Grass was mowed, the next year it came up more fresh and green in the place burnt, than in the middle, and at mowing time was much taller and ranker. Thus far Mr. *Jessops* Letter; I shall only add, that you will much oblige him to assist him with some Queries about the *fulminating Damp*

with what convenient speed you can. †
 † Such Queries as
 are here desired,

are already dispatched away, with hopes, they will shortly receive an answer.

As to the vomiting of strange Worms, I give you a late instance not unlike that in this Letter:

A Son of Mr. *B*, living not far off *Rippon*, about nine years of age, in the month of *February* last was afflicted with great pain in his Stomach, and continual Vomiting. A Powder was given, wherein was a small quantity of *Mercurius dulcis*. He there-

thereupon vomited up several strange Worms, two of which were brought to me at *York*, the one dead, the other alive, and which lived many daies after it came to my hands, and might have lived longer, but that I put it into Spirit of Wine, to preserve it in its true shape. These Worms were very *Caterpillars* with fourteen legs, *viz.* six small pointed, the eight middle stumps, and the two hind claspers; something more than an inch long, and of the thickness of a Ducks-quill, thin haired or rather naked, with brown *annuli*, and a black head. The very same for kind that I have many times seen on Plants, and no doubt, these (as those others) would in due time (if the place had not hindered) have shrunk into *Chrysalis's*, and changed into Moths. As also those mentioned by Mr. *Jessop* would have changed to Beetles.

I am,

Sir,

Your most humble Servant.

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