

January was remarkably mild. It is not very uncommon for one limb to be lost by a sphacelus, attended with the same symptoms, as in these cases; but it is very extraordinary, that a disorder of this kind should run through a whole family, with such amazing violence and rapidity.

A nurse, who has lived with them from the beginning of their illness, has not been affected. She did not live in the house with them before; but used to be with them frequently.

LXXXIV. *Extract of a Letter from the Reverend James Bones, M. A. Minister of Wattisham, near Stowmarket in Suffolk, to George Baker, M. D. F. R. S. relating to the Case of Mortification of Limbs in a Family there.*

Read May 6, 1762. **T**HE following history of the sufferings of a poor family, in my parish of Wattisham, is as circumstantially exact as I can give it you.

On Sunday, January 10, Mary, daughter of John and Mary Downing, sixteen years old, felt a violent pain in her left-leg, which, in an hour or two, affected likewise her foot, and particularly her toes. On the next day, her toes were much swollen, and black spots appeared on them. By degrees, the whole foot became swollen, and black. The pain, which was now chiefly in her toes, was, as she says, as if
dogs

dogs were gnawing her. The blackness and swelling advanced upwards, by slow degrees, till they reached the knee, where the flesh broke, and a great discharge followed. In a little time, the flesh of her leg putrified, and came off at the ankle, together with the whole foot, leaving the leg-bones bare. Her other foot and leg were affected in a few days, and decayed, nearly by the same degrees, and in the same manner. She has now an abscess formed in one of her thighs.

Mary, the mother, was seized, within a few hours of her daughter's first seizure, with the same violent pain under her left foot, or (as she sometimes says) in her left leg. Her toes, foot, and leg, were affected in the same manner as her daughter's; and, in a few days, her other foot and leg suffered in like manner. The flesh of one leg has separated, and come off at the knee, leaving the bones bare, which she will not, at present, suffer to be taken off. The other foot has rotted off at the ankle. Her hands, and a part of her arms, have been, from the first attack, without sensation; and her fingers have been contracted.

In four or five days after the eldest daughter and the mother were first affected, Elizabeth, aged fourteen years, Sarah, aged ten, Robert, aged six, and Edward, aged four, were all taken, on the same day, with violent pains in the feet and legs, chiefly in the left.

Elizabeth was seized only in one leg and foot, which, during three weeks, she could not set on the ground; but stood all that time on the other foot, leaning against the chimney: after which, being taken in the same manner in the other foot, she was obliged

to lie down. One foot mortified, and came off at the ankle; the other leg near the knee.

Sarah was taken in one foot; which mortified, and came off at the ankle. The other leg suffered in the same manner, and separated at the knee.

Robert was taken in both feet. His legs have separated at the knees; and he is now in good health.

Edward was taken in both feet, which have separated at the ankle; and he seems to be doing well.

An infant, two months old, was taken from the woman's breast, as soon as she was seized with the disorder. This child was put out to a nurse, and died in two months. Immediately after death, the feet and hands were observed to turn black.

John, the father of this unfortunate family, continued well a fortnight after the wife was seized. Then he was seized with a violent pain in both his hands. In a short time, his fingers became numb, contracted, and black; the nails came off; and two of the fingers were ulcerated; but are now healing. He has all along complained, at times, of acute, darting pains, through his hands, arms, back, and legs.

The family are all thin, weakly people; but, in general, have been healthy. They have lived (as far as I can learn) just as other poor people in the neighbourhood do, having eaten or drunk nothing, which has disagreed with any of them, except some pork and pease, on which they dined January 19, the day when the two first were seized, and which made three of the children sick at the stomach.

The man has two sons by another wife, who are now in service, and both in good health.

I have always been used to read Lucan's description of the effects of the bite of the little serpent, called *Seps*, as fabulous, or at least greatly exaggerated; and the rather, because, as far as I know, such an account is to be found in no other author. But I have now been an eye-witness to almost the whole scene of horror, so finely painted in the following lines:

———— *Plagæ proxima circum*
Fugit rapta cutis, pallentiaque ossa retexit:
Membra natant sanie: suræ fluxere: sine ullo
Tegmine poples erat: femorum quoque musculus omnis
Liquitur, et nigrâ distillant inguina tabe.

LUCAN. Pharsal. Lib. ix. vers. 767.

Wattisham,
 April 21, 1762.

LXXXV. *Extract of a second Letter from the Rev. Mr. Bones, to Dr. Baker.*

Read May 6, 1762. **I** Have taken all the pains I can to inform myself of every circumstance, which may be deemed a probable cause of the disease, by which the poor family in my parish has been afflicted. But, I fear, I have discovered nothing, that will be satisfactory to you.

The following is an answer to your queries.

Water.] This they have taken out of a ditch, or pool of standing-water, at their own door (as is common in this clay country.) We have no spring, or well, in the parish.

Y y y 2

Beer.]