

V. *A Cure of a Muscular Contraction by Electricity.* By
Miles Partington, in a Letter to William Henly,
F. R. S.

DEAR SIR,

Great Russell-street,
June 13, 1777.

Read Jan. 15, 1777. IT is some time since you informed me that

you had mentioned to Sir JOHN PRINGLE Miss LINGFIELD's cure by electricity; that it excited his attention; and that it was his opinion, that the communication of it to the Royal Society would be deemed important and useful. I hope you will not blame my delay in the compliance with your request. I have waited for no other purpose than to obtain the latest account of the permanency of those good effects, which she had then but recently experienced from our electrical experiments upon her. Of these advantages we have both had repeated confirmation; and I may now, I believe, with strict propriety, from the notes I made for my own satisfaction, submit the following particulars of them to the inspection of whomsoever your judgement shall direct, or to appropriate them to any other purpose you please. As you

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were present when I first waited on this unhappy young lady, you will recollect the condition in which we found her. Her head was drawn down over her right shoulder; the back part of it was twisted so far round, that her face turned obliquely towards the opposite side, by which deformity she was disabled from seeing her feet, or the steps as she came down stairs. The *sterno-mastoideus* muscle was in a state of contraction and rigidity. She had no material pain on this side of her neck; but, owing to the extreme tension of the teguments of the left side, she had a pain continually, and often it was very violent, particularly in sudden changes of the weather. Her pulse was weak, quick, and irregular. She was subject to a great irritability, had frequently a little fever, which came on of an evening, and left her before morning; her spirits were generally exceedingly oppressed, and at times she was slightly paralytic.

She dated the origin of her disorder at something more than two years from that period. She was suddenly seized, going out of a warm room into the cold air, with a pain upon the back of her head, which admitted of small abatement for some months, contracting gradually the muscles to the melancholy deformity we then beheld; and notwithstanding every prudent means had been used to subdue it, and she strictly adhered to every article

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prescribed to her by the faculty, she was sensible of little variation since, and that rather on the unfavourable side.

I urged her to make a trial of Electricity. She was willing while she was in London to try the experiment; and, though the weather was remarkably tempestuous, she came to me the first tolerable day, and was electrified the first time February 18, 1777.

I sat her in an insulated chair, and, connecting it by a chain to the prime conductor of a large electrical machine, I drew strong sparks from the parts affected for about four minutes, which brought on a very profuse perspiration (a circumstance she had been unaccustomed to) which seemed to relax the *massoideus* muscle to a considerable degree; but, as the sparks gave her a good deal of pain, I desisted from drawing them, and only subjected her a few minutes longer to the admission of the fluid, which passed off without interruption from the pores of her skin and adjacent parts. The next time she came to me was the 24th of the same month: as she had been in the afternoon of the first day's experiment a good deal disordered, I changed the mode of conducting, and sat her in a common dining-chair, while I dropped, for five minutes, by the means of a large discharging rod with a glass handle, very strong sparks upon the *massoideus* muscle, from its double origin at the *sternum* and *clavi-*

cula to its insertion at the back of the head. She bore this better than before, and the same good effect followed in a greater degree, and without any of the subsequent inconveniences. I saw her the third time on the 27th: she assured me she had escaped her feverish symptoms on an evening, and that her spirits were raised by the prospect of getting well; that, since the last time I electrified her, she had more freedom in the motion of her head than she had ever experienced since the first attack of her disorder. I persisted in electrifying her after the same manner, March 3d, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 9th; from each time she gained some advantage, and her feverish tendency and nervous irritability went off entirely.

The weather now setting in very unfavourable, and fearful of losing the advantages we had happily reaped from our early efforts, I requested the favour of you, as her next-door neighbour, to electrify her every evening while she was in town, and she might, if any alteration took place, see me occasionally. Fortunately for her, you accepted the proposal, and to your judgement and caution in the conduct of it for the next fortnight (three evenings only excepted) you brought about the happy event; and have received her testimony of gratitude for relieving her from a condition under

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which life could not be desirable, to a comfortable association with her family and friends.

I am, &c.

THE method I pursued was, to place the lady upon a stool with glass legs, and to draw strong sparks, for at least ten minutes, from the muscles on both sides of her neck. Besides this, I generally gave her two shocks from a bottle containing 15 square inches of coated surface fully charged, through her neck and one of her arms, crossing the neck in different directions. This treatment she submitted to with a proper resolution; and it gave me sincere pleasure to find it attended with the desired success.

W. HENLY.

