

VI. *A Letter from John Huxham, M. D. to Dr. Mortimer, Sec. R. S. concerning Polypi taken out of the Hearts of several Sailors just arrived at Plymouth from the West-Indies.*

S I R,

Read May 20.  
1742.

I Have taken the Liberty to send you the following Account, which, I think, contains something very remarkable.—If you think it worthy the Notice of the ROYAL SOCIETY, I beg you will lay it before them.

During the exceeding dry, cold Weather in *February* and *March* last, several of the Men brought Home in the *Deptford* and *Dunkirk* Men of War from the *West-Indies*, were seized with short, importunate, asthmatic Coughs, without any Expectoration—violent and almost continual Palpitation of the Heart, with a perpetual intermitting, trembling, fluttering Pulse, and a constant Anxiety, Pain and Sinking of the Heart, as they expressed it.—They breathed with excessive Difficulty, and could scarce lie down in Bed without Suffocation.—Their Heads, as it were, sunk between their Shoulders, and they had very dead, heavy Countenances.—Some had Pains of the Side, though very little apparent Fever.

Upwards of Twenty Persons were in a very short Time carried off towards the End of *March* in this Manner, notwithstanding the most proper and diligent Care, by Bleeding, Vomiting, Blistering, Attenuants, Diluents, &c.

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Upon this, Mr. *Wyatt*, first Surgeon of the Hospital, who is not only a very ingenious, but careful Practitioner, ordered Two of the Dead to be opened forthwith; they were about Forty Years old.—He found monstrous *Polypi* in both their Hearts, and directly had the Hearts carried to his own House, and soon acquainted me with the whole Matter: We very carefully examined them. The *Polypi* were very nearly of the Colour of the Buff formed on the Surface of highly pleuritic or rheumatic Blood, when quite cold, or rather whiter. They were vastly tough, and seemed to be formed of various *Lamina* very closely connected, though here-and-there a bloody Vein, as it were, was interspersed.—They were not only firmly attached to the fleshy *Columnæ* of the Heart, but were also sunk and inserted strongly into the *Intercolumnia*, or *Sulci*, and that even to the very Bottom of the *Ventricules*.—These Roots, if we may so call them, were of a whiter Colour than the Body of the *Polypus*.

One of these *Polypi* (taken out of the Heart of *Jeremy Mannings*) weighed a full Ounce, not including its Ramifications in the *Arteria Pulmonaris* and the *Cava*, but as it was taken out of the Right Auricle and Ventricle; for it was one continued Mass, and strongly adhered to both.

The *Polypus* taken out of the Left Ventricle of the same Heart, was also very considerable, and rather more firm and compact than that of the Right, but of the very same Colour, and firmly implanted into the Sides of the Ventricle quite down to the *Mucro Cordis*.—Its Branches were shot a great Way into the Subclavian and Carotid Arteries—but very little  
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down the *Aorta*.—I observed one of the femilunar Valves of the *Aorta* beginning to grow bony.

There were likewise found very great *Polypi* in the Right and Left Cavities of the other Heart, of the same Colour, Firmness and Tenacity, but not altogether so large; and they respectively branched their *Appendices* a great Way into the Pulmonary Artery, *Aorta*, &c.

More of the Sailors dying in the very same way soon after, the *Thorax* of another was opened, that of a young Man about Twenty.—In the Right Auricle and Ventricle of his Heart was found a large tough subrubicund *Polypus*, not quite so white as those mentioned before—but there was no such Concretion in the Left.

Now though *Kerkringius* and others have endeavoured to explode the Notion of the Formation of true *Polypi* in the Heart and Blood-vessels; yet *Malpighius*, *Bartholine*, *Tulpius*, *Pechlin*, and others, have given us incontestable Instances of the Existence of true *Polypi* in the Heart, in the strictest Sense; and you have here Three unquestionable Evidences of the like Nature: Such, indeed, especially the Two former, as I never have before met with amidst the very numerous Dissections I have been first and last present at.

Before I conclude this, it may not be amiss to mention, that I had the first Lieutenant and Purser of the *Dunkirk* under my Care in very severe *Pleuro-peripneumonies*, whose Blood was as viscid as I ever saw; and they were with very great Difficulty saved, nor could they be brought to expectorate till the Seventh Day of the Fever.

It may be observed also, that the above Ships came Home from a very hot Climate into a very cold one, in the midst of Winter, and that a long-continued Course of North-easterly Winds kept on, and even increased, the Cold to a great Degree—that Pleurifies, *Peripneumonies*, &c. are commonly the Effects of such a Constitution of Air—that the Blood of such as labour under these Disorders is always extremely sily; and that the Heat of the Weather in the *West-Indies*, and large and long-continued Use of spirituous Liquors, had greatly condensed the Blood of these poor Fellows; and that, in the Blood-vessels of the *Thorax* of such as die of these Distempers, *polypose* Concretions are not uncommonly found.

I am, Sir, with the greatest Respect,

Plymouth,  
April 23. 1742.

*Your obliged,  
and most obedient,  
humble Servant,*

J. Huxham.