

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
INFIRMARY, OR HOSPITAL FOR
SICK-POOR, ERECTED AT
EDINBURGH**

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An Account of the Rise and Establishment of the Infirmary, Or Hospital for Sick-poor, Erected at Edinburgh by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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AMONG the many Objects of Cha-
rity that daily present themselves to
our View, there have been none so
entirely destitute hitherto of Relief
from any publick Institution in
this Country, as the Poor when
attacked with Diseases, or disabled by Accidents ;
for tho' the Royal College of Physicians at *Edin-
burgh*, have for many Years past attended in their
Turns twice a Week at their Hall, to give Advice
to the Poor *gratis*, yet they very often have had the
Mortification to see their Advice and Medicines
prove unsuccessful, by their Patients not having due
A Care

Care taken of them, and by their Want of proper Diet and Lodging.

To supply these Defects, some Gentlemen in the Year 1721, caused print and disperse a Pamphlet, setting forth the great Necessity and Advantages of a Hospital for maintaining and curing sick Poor, and containing Proposals for raising a Fund for such a Hospital. In this they endeavoured to show, that as Men and Christians we have the strongest Inducements, and even Obligations to this Sort of Charity, as it is warmly recommended and enjoined in the Gospel as one of the greatest Christian Duties: That Humanity and Compassion naturally prompt us to relieve our Fellow-Creatures when in such deplorable Circumstances as many are reduced to, Naked, Starving, in the outmost Distress from Pain and Trouble of Body and Anguish of Soul: That as the Relief of these miserable Objects is a Duty, so it is no less Advantage to a Nation, for as many as are recovered in an *Infirmery*, are so many working Hands gained to the Country: That Students in Physick and Surgery might hereby have rather a better and easier Opportunity of Experience, than they have hitherto had by studying abroad, where such Hospitals are, at a great Charge to themselves, and a yearly Loss to the Nation: And as a Proof of the whole, they appealed to the good Effects of the *Infirmaries* in all other civilized Nations.

Tho' these and several other Motives were at large reasoned on by these Gentlemen, yet there appeared at that Time so little Probability of Success, that they dropped the Prosecution of their Scheme.

Notwithstanding of this Discouragement which the first Projectors of an *Infirmery* had met with, in the Year 1725, when the Copartners of the Fishery

Company were about to dissolve themselves, and to divide the Remainder of their Stock, the College of Physicians thought it a proper Opportunity for trying to procure Part of this Money from the Proprietors towards founding a Hospital for sick Poor at *Edinburgh*, and for that End, caused draw up a Form of an Affignation, by which the Subscribers made over their Share in the Fishery Stock to *David Spence* Secretary to the Bank of *Scotland* for the Purpose above-mentioned: But that the good Design might be better and more speedily brought about, and other charitable Persons, who had no Shares in the Fishery Company, might have an Opportunity to contribute, the College caused also prepare a Form of a Bond, by which the Subscribers obliged themselves to pay the Sums annexed to their Names, to Mr. *Spence* for the same Purpose. Both these Papers contained a Clause declaring the Obligations null, if, before a Day specified, the Sum of *L. 2000 Sterl.* was not made up among all the Subscriptions; this being judged the least Sum, on which the Erection of an Infirmary could be set about.

Several Copies of these two Papers being writ out on stamp Paper, and most of the Gentlemen of the Royal College having subscribed one or other of them, they were delivered to such of their Members as were willing to take the Trouble of soliciting for Subscriptions, who being assisted by several of the Incorporation of Surgeons and other charitable People, did obtain Subscriptions for something more than *L. 2000 Sterl.* before the Day specify'd for the Obligations becoming void; which the College of Physicians caused intimate, by an Advertisement in the publick News-Papers, to the Subscribers,

desiring them to pay in their Contributions to *David Spence*, who, as is mentioned already, had consented to allow his Name to be inserted in the Subscription Papers, and had generously undertaken the Trouble of receiving the Payments, and giving Receipts of them; after having given Security to the College of Physicians, to be accountable for the Money received.

In the same Advertisement, the College of Physicians, for a further Encouragement to this pious and necessary Design, obliged themselves, that one or more of their Number, should, without any Prospect of Reward, Fee or Salary, attend the Hospital faithfully.

Since however the Interest of the Sums subscribed for, could not maintain near such a Number of Patients, as the Circumstances of the Country required, more Subscriptions were still solicited for and procured, till *Mr. Spence*, having acquainted them, that there was good Grounds to expect an increasing Stock, and that it wou'd soon be in a Condition to begin the good Work, they resolved to divest themselves of the Management, and therefore in *February 1728*, called a General Meeting of the Contributors and Donors, to whom an Account was given of all the Steps hitherto taken, and of the present Situation of their Affairs.

At that Meeting there were twelve Gentlemen named as a Committee to carry on the Subscriptions, to call in the Money subscribed for, and to prepare a Plan for Erection of the Infirmary.

Among other Means of increasing the Stock, it was proposed to petition the venerable Assembly of this Church for a voluntary Contribution in all the Parishes of the Kingdom, which was presented in Name of the Royal College of Physicians and managed

ged by them, the Hospital having as yet no settled Government. The Desire of the Petition was frankly granted, and the Contribution was pathetically recommended by the venerable Assembly in their Act dated 11th *May* 1728, and ordered to be transmitted to the Ministers of the several Parishes, which was afterwards done.

Some of the Ministers have complied with the Act and Recommendation ; but it is to be regretted, that the far greater Part have neglected to make their Collections, or at least have not yet transmitted the Money collected to Mr. *Spence*, as will appear by the List of Donors hereto annexed.

With the same charitable Zeal, the Reverend Episcopal Clergy in *Edinburgh*, have assisted in promoting this good Work by Collections at their Meeting-houses.

The only Society, besides these mentioned, which as such, have helped to increase the Fund of the Hospital, are the Honourable the Ladies of the Assembly at *Edinburgh*, who have already given the Money arising from two Meetings, appointed for the Benefit of the Infirmary.

In the mean time the Committee went on in performing the Charge intrusted to them, and having brought the Stock to such a Condition, as they were of Opinion the Erection of the Infirmary might be begun upon in *December* 1728, they called another General Meeting of Donors, who, considering the Report of the Committee, ordered the Erection of the Infirmary to be set about and carried on with all convenient Dispatch by Twenty two of their Number, who were appointed Managers, till a Scheme of Management should be digested.

These

These Gentlemen took from the Treasurer to the University of *Edinburgh*, with Consent of the Town-Council, a Lease for 19 Years of a House of a small Rent near the College, which was made more agreeable and convenient, by the Professors of Medicine granting Liberty to the Patients to walk in a Garden immediately adjacent.

The Managers ordered this House to be fitted up for an Infirmary, and necessary Furniture to be bought, and while these were preparing, they agreed with a Gentlewoman to be Mistress or House-keeper, and allowed her to hire a Servant or Nurse for the Patients, both (besides having reasonable Wages) to be entertained in the Infirmary.

The only Difficulty remaining was, how the Infirmary should be provided with Surgeons and Medicines, which was removed by a very generous Offer made, and subscribed by six Chirurgeon-Apothecaries of *Edinburgh*, viz. Messieurs *John McGill*, *Francis Congalton*, *George Cuninghame*, *Robert Hope*, *Alexander Monro*, *John Douglas*, to attend the Hospital duly in their Turns without any Reward or Sallary, to dispense the Medicines prescribed by the Physicians faithfully from their own Shops, each in the Course of his Attendance *gratis*; to give their Advice and Assistance jointly in extraordinary Cases, mutually to supply each others Absence in case of necessary Avocations, and generally to perform all the Duties of Surgeons and Apothecaries to the Infirmary.

As soon as the Infirmary was fitted up and furnished, the Committee agreed on Rules for Management of the Revenue and House, and for admitting and dismissing Patients, which are comprehended among these that were confirmed by the General Meeting

ing of Donors, and by the ordinary Managers, and are hereafter set down.

They next gave Notice, by Advertisements in the News-Papers, that on the 6th *August* 1729, the Hospital would be opened and ready to receive sick Poor, the Number of whom to be received in the Beginning they had determined should be but small, till they should see what the Charges of the Oeconomy would amount to, and how the Interest of the Money lent would answer, lest they should, by taking in too many, expend more than the Annualrents, and be obliged to inroach on the capital Stock, which they resolved at no Rate to do, unless perhaps the Charges of repairing and furnishing the House, with the first Years Maintenance of it, should bring them under a Necessity of some small Advance of Money, which should be reckoned as a Debt to be repounded to the Capital out of the succeeding Year's Annualrents.

That all charitable Persons might have Occasion to throw in their Mite to the charitable House, a Box with two Locks, having a Hole in the Top, is set up in the Passage to the Patients Chambers, wherein may be put what any will not incline to give in to the Treasurer as a Donation to be recorded.

The good Work being thus begun, the Committee prepared a Scheme and Rules for fixt Management of the Infirmary, which being considered and examined in two General Meetings of Donors, were, on the 13th *Jan.* 1728, agreed to as follows.

R U L E S