

## Letter from Erasmus Darwin to Matthew Boulton, 1769/06/09

Darwin writes to Boulton about Boulton's infant daughter, Anne, who suffered from a condition, possibly a dislocation of the hip.

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Wolsley Bridge, Jun. 9-69

Dear Boulton,

WOMAN, says Aristotle, is a two-leg'd animal without Feathers – He certainly meant very young Women! after having given a definition of the Subject of my Letter, the next Thing necessary is a Drawing, here it is, a b c is the said animal, a the Head, be the Body, cc the Legs.

When the animal stands erect, and careless, the Line xy should be horizontal – if it be inclined a few Degrees from the perpendicular, by whatever means this is occasion'd, the whole Figure will gradually undergo the changes express'd in the 2d. f.

1. The misform'd people, that I have happen'd to inspect, were either distorted Spines, and in these the Disease appear'd to be the Consequence of the unequal growth of some Viscus, as the Lungs, or Heart, of the Aorta, and then the Malformation of the Spine was a necessary Evil, and prevented Consumption or Dropsy, or Death in some Shape. These were not lame.

2. Where the gastrocnemii Musculi, which being render'd into the vulgar Tongue, is the Calf of the Leg, were either too strong, of which I have seen two Children, or too Short, the upper part of these muscles having become a hard immovable Callosity. In this Disease the Patient walks on his Toes, which turns also inwards a little, and the internal Side of the Foot rises, the Weight of the Body rest on the Balls of the little Toes, and on the external Side or Edge of the Foot. This Figure is not outr•s, where the Disease is confirm'd.

Mr Meynell has this Disease, and the upper part of the Calf of the Leg is quite hard, and feels like an Exostosis.

If this is the Disease there is no other Method but that I described to you, which you will mention to Dr Small.

3. The Thigh Bone is said sometimes by Falls or other Accidents to bend in the Neck, and thus become shorter, a is the natural Bone and be the diseased one. This Disease I have never examined myself.

Lastly. If you see the Child play sprawling on the Bed, quite naked, and on its feet for some Time, repeatedly, you will see the Defect. If Dr Small and you Honour are not satisfy'd of the Seat of the Disease, pray all of you come over to Lichfield, that we may have a general Consultation, Ladies and Gentlemen. For if it be remediable, it must be NOW. And for this purpose the Defect must be absolutely ascertain'd – Delay is damnable.

I reciev'd some Time ago of Mr Dawkins for your Use, 3-12-0. – The Candlesticks if they are not sold, Mrs Darwin would rather have back again. – That I beg you will send me a Bill, for I am ashamed of being so long, and so much in you debt.

If you see Mr Baumgartner I shall be glad of a Chest of white Florence Wine, if He imports any this Year.

Adieu.