

THE PATIENT'S GAZETTE

December 5, 1666



VALENTINE GREATRAKES: WHAT'S NEXT?

By Wilfred Ecclestone

In his first interview since his meeting with King Charles II, Valentine Greatrakes tells us about his story, his miraculous work, and what's to come.

"What's next? It's beyond my knowing, currently. I'm a man of faith. I do what God calls me to do. Nothing more, nothing less."

He looks down into his pewter cup, swirling the amber ale as he contemplates his next response. He answers with a question. "If I had to choose?"

In 1629, Valentine Greatrakes was born to a Protestant family in

Waterford, a region near the southeastern coast of Ireland. He grew up educated; though he had to flee his hometown in the wake of the Irish Rebellion, he continued studying Humanity and Divinity with the German Minister John Daniel Getsius. And when he returned, he acted as a lieutenant in the English Parliamentary Army, fighting against the Irish Royalists.

He looks the part. Age has weathered his face, but he carries a gentlemanly aura about him. He doesn't stutter. His posture is

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pains, and swells!!!

immaculate.

W: "When did you discover your abilities?"

The Toothbrush: What is it?

Clifton Baine

In recent years, many have heard rumors of a relatively novel invention in relation to health. A few of us may even know someone who owns one of these bristly fellows. Through careful investigation, I've gotten my hands on one.

The toothbrush is a small, skinny thing, with a handle of bamboo or bone. On one end, there's an abundance of short, rough bristles. It's quite similar to a hairbrush, but it's used clean teeth.

Some might wonder why one would have to brush their teeth. Why not use a linen cloth and paste like everybody else, or just go without?

The simple answer: convenience.

And turns out, it's not particularly new at all. The Chinese have been using toothbrushes for centuries to keep their teeth clean.

V: "I believe it was in 1662, when I married Ruth, my wife..."

During the beginnings of

their marriage, Greatrakes found himself possessed with reoccurring dreams calling him to heal. Not through herbs, prescriptions, or other rational forms of medicine--he healed through touch. He first experimented with his wife, and to his delight, he succeeded in curing her ailments, simply by stroking her with his hands.

In the following years, he published a pamphlet on his healing abilities, and it's no surprise that word about his miraculous powers spread like wildfire. He wasn't a fraud, either, Greatrakes assures me. His patients raved about his abilities and the near-instantaneous results of his work. And though he primarily treated the King's Evil (also known as scrofula), he also cured a variety of illnesses. Even Richard Boyle, founder of the Royal Society, witnessed and espoused his healing.

"Who have I cured?" A twinkle emerges in his eye. "There have been so many. One I remember most was a friend. He was one of the first I healed. Robert Phayre, ex-Governor-- it only took a couple of minutes

Trephination: When and Where?

Wulfstan Bell

Trepanation; we've all know of it. It's a standard procedure to all sorts of head wounds and ailments; whether it's a migraines, a fractured heads, or a penetration of the skull, trepanation is a quick, safe, and versatile solution that can be executed swiftly and easily in the comfort of one's own home.

Some even receive the surgery preventatively; many working class citizens, upon receiving any sort of head injury, rush to their local healer and request a trepanation, even if there's little to no need for it.

Most patients aren't familiar with what the process of trepanation looks like, and there are three methods that are mainly used in Europe. A trepanner could make small, straight cuts and remove a fragment of the skull, or to use a circular saw and cut out a piece. One could also scrape the skull until an opening emerged. Make sure to choose the option that's right for you!

And a quick recommendation by experts; practice is showing that trepanation may be extreme in certain cases. For example, in cases of mild epilepsy, it should be bypassed completely. Only in severe cases should the head be opened, releasing the evil air from the body.

to dispel his fever."

W: "And how did you do it?"

"I touched him with my hands." Greatrakes shrugs. "That is all."

That is all. After almost four years of miracles, Greatrakes remains humble, almost nonchalant towards his own power. Meanwhile, scientists and healers alike have been fascinated and puzzled by his skills and the efficacy of his work. We asked physicians in our area to share their thoughts, and two weighed in to comment.

"Scrofulas are round growths that are imbedded into the tendons, muscle, and blood vessels of the neck." While demonstrating, anatomist and physician Harold Eatone holds his hands in a circle, creating a space approximately the size of a chestnut, or a small fruit. "They *can* be removed, but Galen warns against hasty or unnecessary surgery; there was once a case where the doctor destroyed the nerves of his patient and left him mute. More often, I prescribe ointment or a paste, or lance the growth and let the pus drain. My practice is just as effective..."

Humorist Clifford Lewine had his own theory to share. "According to

Hippocratic texts, the head is occupied by a lot of moisture. When there is an excess of phlegm, it trickles into the glands in the neck, causing swelling and thus, the King's Evil. Greatrakes likely has an especially choleric constitution, and repeated contact with his hands draws out and neutralizes excess phlegm through the skin."

Greatrakes's explanation is much more simple, and much more spiritual.

"Usually, only touch by the King could cure scrofula. I am the seventh son of a seventh son, so I have been blessed by God with healing abilities.

JOHN WYMER

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As with any healer, there *are* a few skeptics of his work. With his recent failure to procure results in the Court of King Charles II, some wonder if he is a fraud after all, or if he's lost his magic touch.

To that, he laughs. "My gifts are bestowed by God, so he is in full control of who is healed and who isn't. My work is complete if he commands it to be. Either way, I should've known better than to test Him, as we are called to trust in Him and his works."

He's lived up to the label: man of faith, miracle healer. After my last question, he tips the last of his drink into his mouth.

"And to answer your first question," Greatrakes smiles a bit as he wipes his mouth with a kerchief. "If I could choose. I think I'd travel back home, to Ireland. Farm a bit. Maybe raise a couple more children."

What an ordinary ending that would be, for such an extraordinary man.

Make sure to see him while he's still in town!