

V. *Mr. Zachary Mayne's Letter, 1694. Concerning a Spout of Water that happened at Topsham on the River between the Sea and Exeter.*

S I R,

I Received yours, and should have given my self much sooner the Satisfaction of Answering it, had I not met with hindrances; I have taken pains to get the best Information that I could, and hope I have with some difficulty pickt out a little Truth out of a vast heap of Falshoods. My Informants are Persons using the Seas, and are well acquainted with (Accidents shall I call them, or rather) Prodigies of this Nature, which are very frequent abroad, though rarely, I think 'tis said never seen before with us in our River, though some pretend to have seen of them in the *Downs*. The *French* call these sorts of Appearances *Trombs*, I suppose from the Figure and the Noise that they make, that word signifying a sort of Humming Top. They are certain Elevations of Water during Storms and Tempests, reaching from the Superficies of the Sea to the Clouds. They happen several ways, sometimes the Water is seen to boyl, and raise it self for a considerable space round about a Foot from the Surface, above which appears, as it were, a thick and black Smoak, in the midst of which is observed a sort of Stream or Pipe resembling a Tunnel, which ariseth as high as the Clouds; At other times these Pipes or Tunnels are observed to come from the Clouds, and suck up the Water with great noise and violence. They move from the place where they were first gathered according to the motion of the Wind, and discharge themselves sometimes into the Sea, to the unavoidable

unavoidable Destruction of such Ships as are in their way, if they be small Vessels, and to their great Damage be they never so big: Sometimes on the Shoar, beating down all they meet with, and raising the Sand and Stones to a prodigious height. 'Tis said, that Vessels that have any Force usually fire their Guns at them loaden with a Bar of Iron, and if they be so happy as to strike them, the Water is presently seen to run out of them with a might noise, but no further mischief. Ours happened *Tuesday* last, the *7th. of August, 1694.* between Nine and Ten of the Clock in the Forenoon; 'twas then very near, if not quite low Water, which is lookt on as a special Providence, since had it been High Water, 'tis concluded its strength would have been much greater, and its consequences more sad. The Water that was near it seemed to fly hither and thither, as though 'twould fain make its escape from it: Yet I cannot find upon Enquiry that the Channel was at all wholly dry. There was also some Wind, though not so violent as it had been before; and when the Spout or *Tromb* began to move, it went with the Wind like a dark smoak, and the Wind being then W. N. W. its course was E. S. E. I have sent you a rude Draught of the manner of its passage after it began to move, according to the best Information I could get, for I was not at home when it happened.

The marks + + + shew the River, the Letter O the Spout. The Letter S Mr. *Seaward's* House (who was an Eye-witness of it) which it gently touched with little or no Damage, blowing only off a few Tiles. The Letter G the House of one Widdow *Goldsworthy*, which it in part uncovered, took off almost all the Thatch of her Garden Wall, brake down a large Limb of a Plumb-Tree which stood at the higher end of her Garden, and which is more Remarkable than all the

F rest,

rest, it took off an Apple-Tree which was no way decay'd, and between fifteen and sixteen Inches about, within two or three Inches from the Ground, almost as exactly as any Saw could have done it, and carried it, as I judge, (for I did not measure it) between Twenty and Thirty Foot from the place where it grew, and that not forward in the Path that it took, but almost directly backward, which makes me conclude that it had a double Motion; the one external from the Wind strait forward, the other internal and circular, like the Fly of a Jack, which a Man may carry in his Hand, that will strike any thing either forward or backward as it meets with it. G with a Bar under it shews you Mr. *Green's* House, which was for the most part untiled, and backward in the Court there was a Linny that rested upon a Wall, which indeed it heaved a little out of its place, part of it hung on one side of the Wall, and part on the other; but not broken in pieces, nor much injured, it having been since restored to its proper place. The Letters WL shew you two Houses more that were very much damaged in their coverings, which is the more Remarkable, for that Mr. *Moxam's* House, marked MM, though it stood between the Injured Houses, and was much higher than either, had only two or three Quarries of Glass broken. E E E E E shews the march of the Spout. The Letter X the Planks that were blown some upright, some several Yards out of their place. D a Ship newly lanch'd, of about One Hundred Tuns, which was much shaken, but not hurt. K a Mast of near a Tun weight, thrown out of its place. W the Anchor that was torn out of the Ground, and carried seven or eight Foot with a Boat that was fastened to it, and blown up into the Air, that Boat was rent from the Head to the Keel. B another new Boat blown about six Foot high, and turned upside down.

down. A a Fisher Boat with one Man in it, which was near the place where the Spout was at first perceived, but through Mercy escaped. L A a Lane that goes from the River, in which some Houses suffered Damage, which shews that the Spout was divided in its march. 'Tis no small Mercy that no Man, Woman, or Child received the least Injury in their Persons. God shews us what he can do, happy we, if we understood his meaning, and comply with it; but alas, Mercies and Judgments are soon forgotten.

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Fig: 1

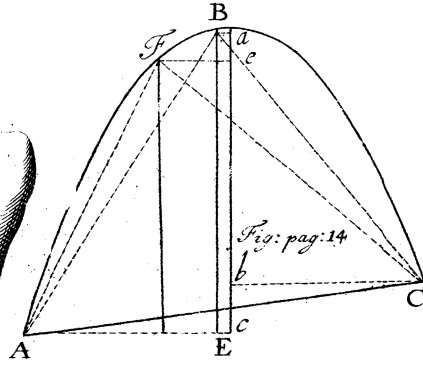
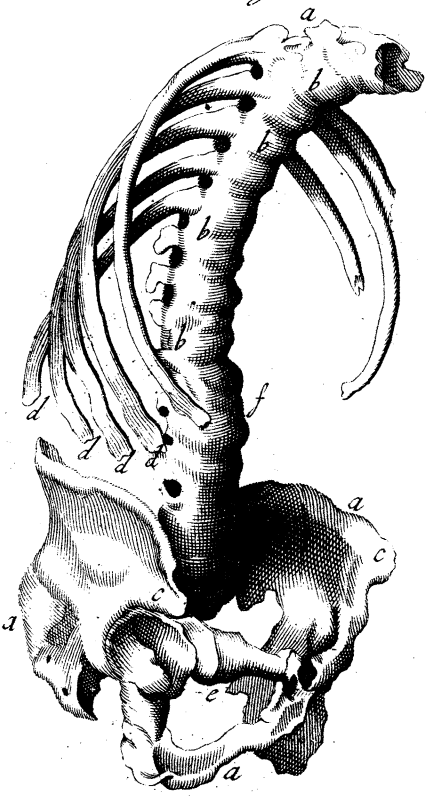


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Fig: 2.

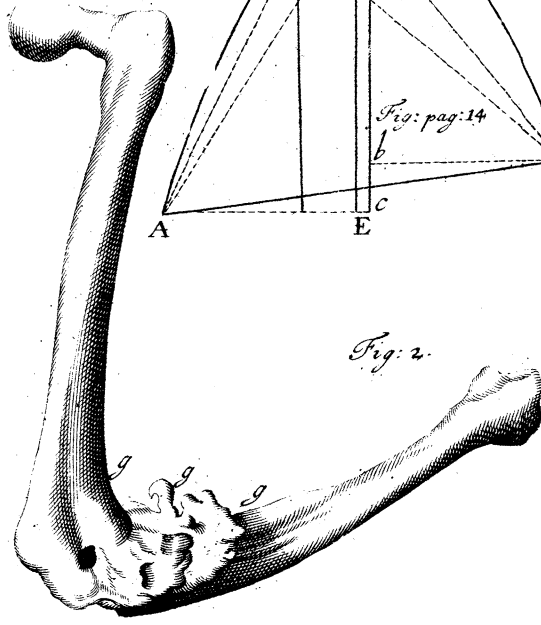


Fig: 3.

