

**Notice of an instance of maternal impressions : a letter addressed to Prof. M'Kendrick.**

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**Publication/Creation**

[Place of publication not identified] : [publisher not identified], [between 1800 and 1899?]

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/px78d2mj>

**Provider**

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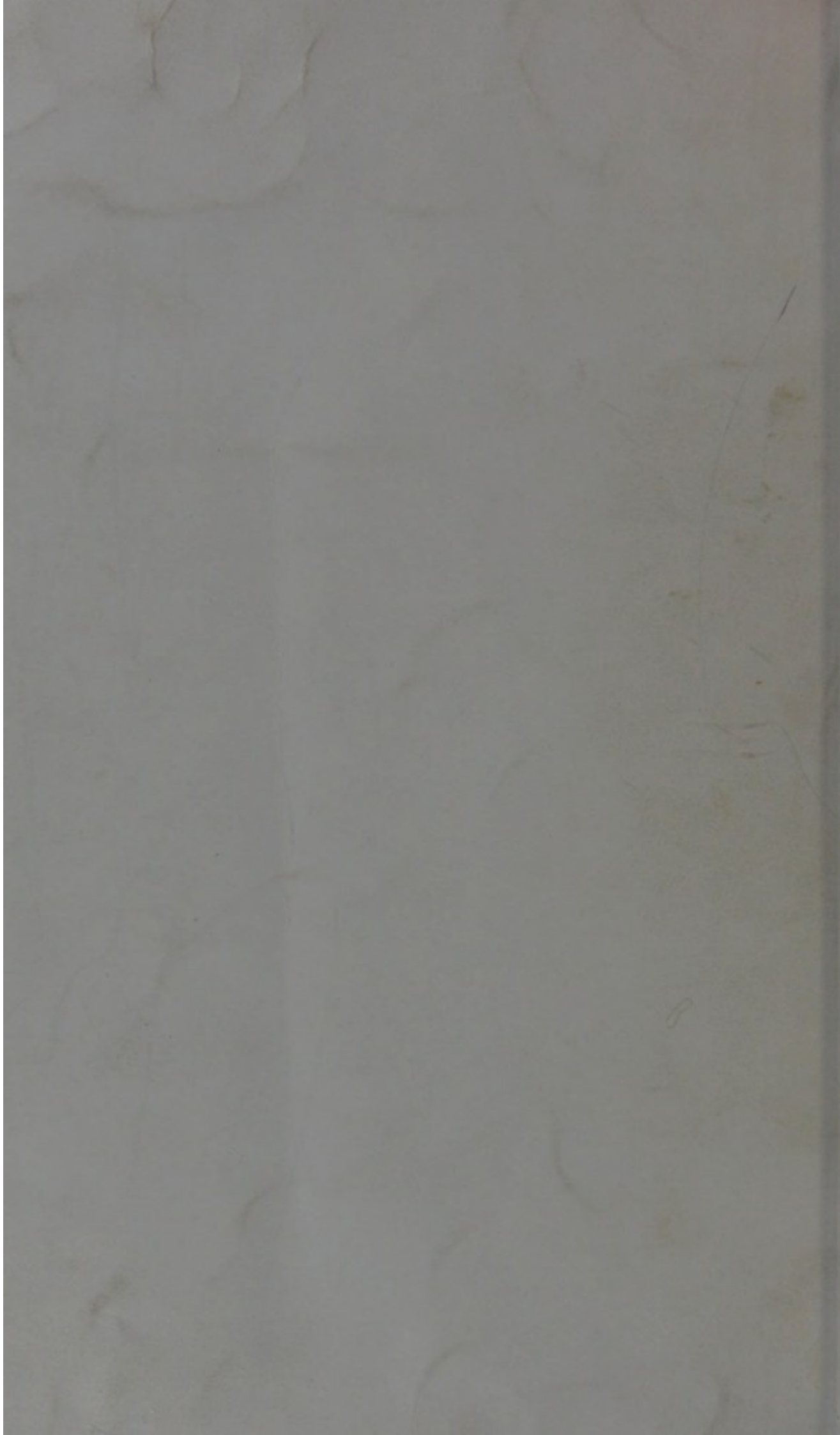
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*John Tennant.*

NOTICE OF AN INSTANCE OF MATERNAL IMPRESSIONS. A LETTER ADDRESSED TO PROF. M'KENDRICK.

SIR,—I send the following statement of facts which occurred in my own family circle, as they are, I think, of some scientific interest in regard to the possibility of prenatal influences affecting the offspring.

J. X., the child in question, was born on February 14, 1863, and she is still living.

In the previous June, Mrs X., her mother (then pregnant), was summoned to pay what was believed to be a farewell visit to her mother, Mrs Z., who was supposed to be dying. She paid a second similar visit about the end of July, and was deeply affected by the circumstances. Mrs Z., however, did not at that time die, but recovered, and died three years later, in 1865.

About the time of the first visit, which took place on June 27, Mrs X.'s husband gave her a flat band-bracelet, which at the clasp was just over half an inch in diameter. He clasped it himself on the right arm. He caught the skin in putting it on, hurting her considerably, and she with difficulty repressed a scream. The pinch caused a red mark on the arm.

When J. X. was born in the following February she presented a ridiculous likeness to an old woman, and was nicknamed

“grannie” and “nutcracker” from the first. None of Mrs X.'s other children were the least like her, and I can myself remember hearing of her likeness to her grandmother (Mrs Z.), and of her queer appearance.

Besides this, she had a red mark on the right forearm, just



above the wrist on the outside, and not far from the spot where the clasp of the bracelet would naturally come if put on with the clasp outside.

The present shape of the marks is given in the inclosed wood-cut, which also gives a reduced drawing (scale  $\frac{1}{3}$ ), which will show pretty much the appearance they must have had when J. X. was born. The lowest mark in the drawing, which is the one highest up the arm, is fainter than the other three, and until I asked for an exact tracing of the marks Mrs X. was unaware of its existence.

Mrs X. believed that the marks originally bore a strong resemblance to the red marks caused by the pinch; and it would appear that at the time of J. X.'s birth this may well have been the case, but her memory of the original mark is evidently inexact, and not reliable as to details.

When J. X. was seven years old she developed epilepsy (originally in teething convulsions), and is now, I regret to say, a great sufferer from the complaint.

Mrs X. is still living, aged 62. A. L., who was the upper-nurse at the time, perfectly remembers all the circumstances, both the original injury to the wrist, the mark thereby caused, and the birth-mark on the infant, as well as the curious chiselled features, prominent chin, and old-woman look which distinguished J. X. as a baby.

Cases of this kind are so rare, that if the interest of the case depended on the birth-mark alone, the exact resemblance of the two marks would be of great importance, in order to exclude accidental coincidence, and satisfactory evidence of such exact resemblance must always be, as in this case, very difficult to obtain. I believe, however, that it is admitted by many that great agitation of the mother during pregnancy may tend to develop diseases such as epilepsy in the offspring; and if so, I think the triple coincidence of the wrist-mark, the strange likeness to an old woman, and the subsequent epilepsy, when taken in conjunction with the details given in this letter, may make the case worthy of being recorded in your Journal.—I am, &c.,

J. T.

To Professor M'Kendrick, M.D.