

**A letter to the Right Honourable and Honourable the Directors of Greenwich Hospital, containing an exposure of the measures resorted to, by the medical officers of the London Eye Infirmary, for the purpose of retarding the adoption, and execution of plans for the extermination of the Egyptian ophthalmia from the Army, and from the Kingdom, submitted for the approval of Government, by Sir William Adams.**

### **Contributors**

Adams, Sir William, 1783-1827.

Long, William, 1747-1818

London Infirmary for Curing Diseases of the Eye.

Royal College of Surgeons of England

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**LETTER** *Com,*

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE AND HONOURABLE

THE

**DIRECTORS OF GREENWICH HOSPITAL,**

CONTAINING

AN EXPOSURE OF THE MEASURES RESORTED TO,

BY

**The Medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary,**

FOR THE PURPOSE OF

*Retarding the Adoption, and Execution of Plans*

FOR

**THE EXTERMINATION**

OF THE

**EGYPTIAN OPHTHALMIA**

FROM

**THE ARMY, AND FROM THE KINGDOM,**

SUBMITTED

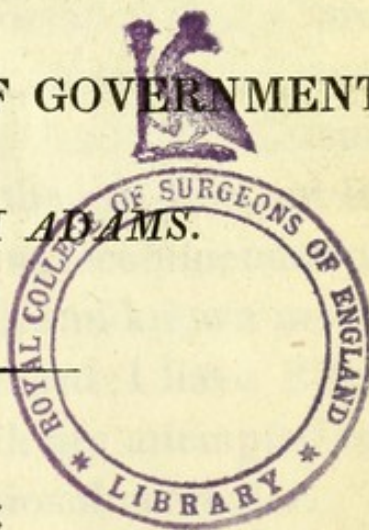
**FOR THE APPROVAL OF GOVERNMENT,**

*BY SIR WILLIAM ADAMS.*

**London :**

PUBLISHED BY BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY, PATERNOSTER-ROW; AND J. HATCHARD,  
PICCADILLY; ALSO BY W. BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH; AND HODGES  
AND M'ARTHUR, DUBLIN.

**1817.**



LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE AND HONORABLE

THE

DIRECTORS OF GREENWICH HOSPITAL



*Will<sup>m</sup> Long Esq<sup>r</sup>*



London:

Printed by W. Clowes, Northumberland-court, Strand.  
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PICCADILLY; ALSO BY W. BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH; AND LONGES  
AND M'ARTHUR, DUBLIN.

TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND HONOURABLE  
THE  
DIRECTORS OF GREENWICH HOSPITAL.

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MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

IT is one of the most painful circumstances of life, when a man who is conscious that he has endeavoured to govern his whole conduct, moral and professional, by the most undeviating rules of honour and integrity, feels himself called upon to repel attacks that have been made upon both. Hitherto, I have in silence borne accumulated injuries; but there is a point beyond which, forbearance becomes criminal. I shall at length defend myself.

It is a duty I owe to you, who have been pleased so publicly to express your entire approbation of my conduct, to prove that I am not unworthy of that approbation. It is a duty I owe to myself, to resist the calumny which from so many quarters, with a kind of incorporated strength, assails me; and, though last, not least, it becomes me to yield to the urgent recommendation of friends, who have known me well, and known me long, to dismiss (and they are convinced I have it in my power) the various stigmas which are attempted to be fixed upon my moral and professional character.

Many of them think I have delayed that too long, which I do reluctantly at last. I had flattered myself, that attacks which are not founded in truth

must die away ; and that falsehood would grow weary of its efforts ; but envy and jealousy, particularly when involved with the more sordid interests, seldom, I fear, cease, till they have effected the ruin of their object, or till they have roused the power they strive to overthrow, into an exertion that at length crushes themselves. Those falsehoods should, indeed, have been strangled in their birth, and I ought to blame myself for having permitted them to grow into the importance which they assume ; but I yielded my indignant feelings to the judgment of a much-esteemed friend, whose advice, on all former occasions, experience had taught me to respect.

I have now however found, and I ought to have known it before, that we live in a world which is the daily dupe of its own credulity, where persevering falsehood is too often taken for truth, whose garb it assumes ; but I trust that the following pages will expose the disgraceful and violent deviations from it, of which I charge those who have accused me. I may appear to be bold in my pretensions ; but I have no other courage than that which conscious rectitude inspires, nor any confidence, but in the superior arms I possess to encounter my enemies.

Their charges against me have been disseminated every where, and by every means ; but their refutation is at hand ; I only ask the calm and candid attention of those who know me, and who have heard of them. I am well assured, my Lords and Gentlemen, that such attention I shall receive from you ; but I claim it as a *right*, from those whose minds have been poisoned by the publications of my adversaries, to read this letter.

Their publications have accused me of robbing the

dead of his fame,—and the living of their reward ; of using the most unreserved means to advance my private interests ;—of assuming professional merit and peculiar modes of practice to myself, which I had borrowed from others ;—of making a boast of inventions as of the first importance, whose actual use is comparatively trivial ;—and of keeping such experience as I might have acquired secret, with the low, interested zeal of an empiric, for my own individual application, contrary to every feeling of humanity, and the liberal spirit of a liberal profession. Nay, my Lords and Gentlemen, your honourable protection of me, and your public approbation of those services which you especially called me to perform, have involved even you in that censure, which, in such various shapes, and from such various directions, has fallen upon myself.

The success of my new and improved operations for cataract in curing the pensioners of your Hospital, (corroborated as it was by official papers,) was the *remote cause*, and my subsequent proposal to eradicate the ophthalmia from the army was the *immediate cause*, which called forth that Report from the London Infirmary for Diseases of the Eye, wherein you were treated with the disrespect, which can meet only a contemptuous indifference from you, but has been in the greatest degree injurious to me ; and therefore merits that exposure to which the following pages are dedicated.

The purport and character of that publication I should treat with the open severity which it deserves, were it not for the respect due to those gentlemen who formed the Committee on the occasion, and who must have been induced, by the misrepresenta-

tions of their medical officers, to become ostensible parties, and to give the sanction of their respectable names to that injurious act. They owe me no common reparation for the injury which they have inconsiderately, but most unwarrantably, done me, by pronouncing thus decidedly upon a subject of which they could not be competent judges, and I doubt not I shall receive from them hereafter, that justice, which, as gentlemen and men of honour, they must perceive that they are bound to give me.

It was my wish to compress the following Narrative of facts into a smaller compass; but it is an essential object that my defence should be complete; and that object could not be attained but from a succession and variety of documentary proofs, which should establish, by the most unquestionable evidence, the degrading nature and character of those hostilities which are so actively and systematically carried on against me,—the artifices with which they have been practised,—and the combinations with which they have been supported. I have, however, no doubt of the conviction which must follow an unbiassed perusal of these pages. They will, I am confident, fulfil their object, by proving, that clamour is not reason,—that assertion is not fact,—and that accusation is not guilt.

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My acquaintance with the late Mr. Saunders commenced in his professional attendance on me when a boy at school, during a severe illness. He was then apprentice with the late Mr. Hill, an eminent practitioner of medicine and surgery at Barnstaple, in Devonshire.

Some years after I also became the apprentice of Mr. Hill, and, as Mr. Saunders had done, remained with him five years. On my arrival in London, to complete my professional education at St. Thomas's and Guy's hospitals, I found Mr. Saunders the anatomical demonstrator at the former. At the expiration of the first year of my studies, he invited me to witness his practice at the London Dispensary, over which he presided, for the treatment of diseases of the eye and ear; where I made myself so useful to him, that, in a short time, he almost wholly confided the management of the ear cases to my care; and, when circumstances obliged him to be absent from town, those of the eye also. From the commencement of my attendance on his dispensary in May, 1807, to August, 1808, when I quitted London, (with one exception of several weeks that I was confined to my room by the Egyptian ophthalmia\*, and was subsequently obliged to go to the country for the re-establishment of my health, which had been seriously injured by the necessary treatment during that confinement,) I not only assisted him in all his operations, both public and private, but subjected a large portion of that time, which would otherwise have been devoted to my studies at the above hospitals, to comply with his wishes, and to promote his accommodation.

The kindness of unreserved instruction on the part of Mr. Saunders, and the most grateful attentions and acknowledgments on mine, produced that intimate and cordial friendship between us, which, with the interval only of a few days, continued to the end of his valuable life. That interval, which was the cause of

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\* I caught this ophthalmia, from accidentally touching my own eye with an instrument, which I had employed in examining a patient infected at the dispensary with that dreadful disorder.

equal astonishment and mortification to me, and which his subsequent conviction rendered so short, arose from his easy, amiable, and unsuspecting nature, which suffered his mind to be poisoned with suspicions by the arts of those, who misemployed his confidence in them, to exert their malignant jealousy against me.

On the establishment of the West of England Eye Infirmary at Exeter, which was the earliest scene of my practice, Mr. Saunders, so far from considering it as a rival institution, (as others have since done,) gave it the sanction of his name, by becoming its consulting oculist; nor, in the performance of my duties there or elsewhere, did any person ever hear me mention his name, but in terms of gratitude for his disinterested friendship, in affording me the almost exclusive participation of that extensive experience which he possessed, and to which I am, and ever shall consider myself, so much indebted.

In the commencement of my practice, I had no other mode to follow but that which my master had taught me. This I strictly adhered to, till imperious circumstances induced me, though with respectful diffidence, to deviate from it. One of my first deviations was in the treatment of the morbid effects produced by the Egyptian ophthalmia, in the membrane lining the inner surface of the eye-lids. Some time previous to my leaving Mr. Saunders, I had witnessed two cases of this kind, but have only a distinct recollection of one of them. It was that of Mr. Fidkins, linen-draper, Hanway-passage, Oxford-street. The inner membrane of the eye-lids was granulated, and very much inflamed, but his sight was at that time perfect, there being no films as yet formed, which, when the granu-

lations are permitted to remain, frequently result from the continued friction of this rough surface of the lids upon the transparent cornea, thereby causing blindness. The practice of Mr. Saunders was to snip off the eminences with a pair of curved scissors, and frequently to inject upon the raw surfaces a strong solution of lunar caustic. The inflammation and pain excited by this treatment were extreme, and the patient rarely recovered from the most acute sufferings under twenty-four hours. As this application was repeated every three or four weeks, and even oftener when the eyes would admit of it, the extraordinary patience, resolution, and fortitude which Mr. Fidkins displayed, were absolutely necessary, to secure the benefit which he ultimately received.

The following letter fully explains his situation:—

*Hanway Street, Oxford Street, February 4, 1815.*

DEAR SIR,

About eight years since I was afflicted with a most violent inflammation in my eyes, and for two years and a half experienced but very little relief, though I consulted the most eminent gentlemen of the faculty; at last was recommended to Mr. Saunders, who cut off a number of little warts from the inside of my eyelids, and afterwards injected upon the sore places a strong solution of caustic, which gave me the most excruciating torture for at least twenty-four hours after each operation. This was repeated as often as the state of the eye would admit of it, for it frequently brought on an ulcer, as Mr. Saunders called it, which laid me up at least for a month at a time. I underwent the syringing at least ten times before the right eye was cured. The left eye was cured in the course of two months, but the other took twelve months before it was well. Nobody can imagine the extreme misery the syringing always put me to, and I believe he could hardly persuade any one else to undergo so many operations but myself. He twice opened, and afterwards divided, the arteries of my temples, in order to stop the inflammation. Nothing but the extreme anxiety to get my eyes well would have induced me to submit to the agony I experienced, which was beyond all description.

I shall always revere the name of that good and clever man, whose soothing attention and kindness I remember with the greatest gratitude, and by whose skill now I bless God, I enjoy as good sight as I ever I did, although it is proper for me to state, that *my sight before I went to him was not hurt, the disor-*

*der being confined to the lids; and it was only while the ulcers lasted that my vision was injured, which returned when the ulcers were cured\*.*

I am, dear Sir,

Your obedient humble Servant,

THOMAS FIDKINS.

SIR WILLIAM ADAMS,  
26, Albemarle-street.

I, however, in my first trials of the practice established by Mr. Saunders, did not meet with patients who possessed the fortitude of Mr. Fidkins. They were blind ophthalmia pensioners from the army, and I could not prevail on them to submit a second time to this very painful operation. They did not hesitate to declare that they would prefer blindness, through the remainder of their lives, to the endurance of those sufferings which were necessary to their cure†. The reso-

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\* I request the particular attention of my readers to the *purport* of this passage, as upon it rests a very material argument. I shall have frequent occasion to refer to it.

† The injection of the solution of lunar caustic, even when the eye is free of inflammation, is attended with very severe pain, and sometimes accompanied with prejudicial effects to vision, an instance of which is detailed in the following letter, received within these few days:

SIR,

In obedience to your wishes, I beg to state the treatment I underwent before I became your patient. I was advised by an eminent surgeon, (Mr. Trewers) to have a solution of caustic injected upon my eyes for films, which was repeated twenty times. The pain produced by the syringing was so dreadfully ACUTE as to bring on severe head-achs, to which I had never been before subject. Instead of removing, it produced blindness in one eye, with which I could see before this dreadful application was applied. The vision of the other eye also was injured by the same cause; my head aches, under your treatment, are within a week relieved, and I find my sight considerably improved.

The extreme pain lasted for two or three hours, during which I could do nothing, and it afterwards gradually subsided. The inflammation and heat produced by the caustic was most extremely violent, even after the original inflammation, for which I applied to the surgeon in question, had been removed. The films upon the eye, for which, together with the inflammation, I applied, were in no degree lessened, on the contrary, my friends who frequently examined my eyes, thought them increased by the syringing.

I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

Oldford, Borough, 3d June, 1817.

GEORGE COOPER.

lute determination of these men, necessarily compelled me to turn my thoughts to the discovery of some less painful, and more expeditious mode of treatment. After the unsatisfactory trials of two substitutes for Mr. Saunders's practice, one of which I previously submitted to his approbation, it fortunately occurred to me, that with a very small, sharp-cutting scalpel, I might be able, at once, to remove the whole of the granulated and thickened membrane, and to prevent its regrowth by astringent applications. The result surpassed my most sanguine expectations; I usually found, that by one operation, and in the course of a month or six weeks, I was enabled, without any acute suffering to the patient, to perform a radical cure, in cases where the disease existed in a much greater degree, than in the instance of Mr. Fidkins.

Among my first successful cases of Egyptian ophthalmia was John Frost, a native of Exeter, who had been dismissed from the army as incurable, after having become blind in both eyes, in which state he had remained on a pension of upwards of 22*l.* per annum. This man not only laboured under a state of granulated eye-lids, tenfold more diseased than the patient of Mr. Saunders already mentioned; but he was also afflicted with opacities of the cornea, in so dense and extensive a degree, that he was incapable of seeing any object whatever, and was led about the streets by a guide. I had, therefore, in his case, a most difficult treatment to accomplish. First, to remove the granulations of the lids. Secondly, the opacities of the cornea, which latter symptom, (occasioning blindness), it will be seen by referring to Mr. Fidkins's letter, did not exist in his case, unless when produced by the violent action of the caustic. After Frost's sight was restored

to *its natural state*, he applied to Mr. Russell, Treasurer of the West of England Eye Infirmary, to obtain the situation of a clerk, for which he was well qualified.

The following letter, with which Mr. Russell has favoured me, will explain the nature of this application; the circumstances of which, from their extraordinary character, he was induced at the time particularly to note down. This letter I insert, because a most invidious interpretation has been given to a correspondence between Mr. Saunders and myself, that arose out of Frost's case; and I conceive that Mr. Russell's testimony, if I had no other documents, would be fully sufficient to clear me from the malignant charge, of having acted towards Mr. Saunders in any other manner, than was consistent with the most perfect honour, delicacy, and friendship.

*Exeter, January 5th, 1815.*

DEAR SIR,

Agreeably to your request, I now send you an account of the circumstances respecting John Frost, whom you cured, after he had been discharged from the army, on a pension of upwards of 20*l.* a year, blind from the ophthalmia.—The accuracy of the facts stated in this letter, I am willing to attest on oath, if required to do so.—In the beginning of 1809 I received a letter, signed J. L. Frost, offering his services as a clerk; but, not knowing the writer, I shewed the letter to you, and inquired if you thought it was written by the same person who had been discharged from the army, in consequence of the ophthalmia; and since led blind about the streets of Exeter, but whom report had stated you had recently cured. You replied it was, and that he was then capable of acting as clerk to any one. Having observed, in the newspapers, that a great number of young men had from time to time been discharged from the army, from the consequences of ophthalmia, and understanding that Government were most anxious to obtain a cure for the disease, I observed his case should be made known to the Commander-in-Chief. Considering no time should be lost, I waited on Major-General Thewles, (the then Commanding Officer of the Western District,) to whom I gave Frost's letter, mentioning what I had heard concerning him, and intimating if it were not desirable to examine the writer as to the facts. To this General Thewles fully assented, and agreed to attend the Exeter Infirmary the next admission day, which he accordingly did, with Colonel Head, of the 13th Dragoons, some more of the officers of that regiment, then quartered at Exeter, together with the surgeon belonging to it. They examined several pensioned

soldiers under your treatment for the ophthalmia, but particularly Frost, from whom they heard related the circumstances of his discharge and subsequent cure, who also read and wrote before them. General Thewles expressed himself to me, when alone, in the highest degree satisfied with the proofs of your success, and urged the propriety of immediately communicating what he had seen to the Commander-in-Chief, as the ophthalmia then existed to such an extent throughout the army. On my informing you this, and intimating what I thought the best mode of proceeding, *you positively declined making any communication to the Commander-in-Chief, without first consulting your best friend, Mr. Saunders, who had first pointed out to you the seat and nature of the disease.* I then urged you to write to that gentleman without delay, which you did, and handed me his answer, wherein he disapproved of the intended communication, at which I own I was astonished. *You then said, the business must drop, as you would rather lose the chance of gaining 5000*l.* than do any thing which Mr. Saunders might consider as ungrateful towards him, from whom you had received so much professional information.*

I perfectly recollect lamenting to you, that so fatal a disease as the ophthalmia should be suffered to go on in so great a degree unchecked in the army, because an individual thought it his interest to keep the mode of cure a secret for the time being.

If any censure has at this distant period fallen upon you for acting according to my suggestions and advice to you on that occasion, I am sorry for it. Nothing can be more evident, from the statement of facts which I have just made, than that I was warranted in acting as I did on the score of humanity, and as being an officer of a charity in which these important cures had been effected.

With respect to yourself, I can solemnly aver, that your conduct (as far as it has come within my knowledge) has been honourable and grateful to your deceased preceptor, and that you have uniformly attributed the merit of the discovery in question to him. At the same time, I cannot close my letter, without venturing an opinion, that no *disinterested* person can read the facts on each side without acknowledging that a great degree of credit is due to you, not only for your improvements on the late Mr. Saunders's discoveries, but for your indefatigable and *gratuitous* exertions, in so widely extending the benefits resulting from them to society. Believe me to be,

Dear Sir, very truly your's,

ROBERT RUSSELL,

*Treasurer to the Exeter Eye Infirmary.*

This letter requires no comments; it speaks for itself.

In compliance with Mr. Russell's suggestions, I did not delay in dispatching a letter to Mr. Saunders, after it had been favoured with the entire approbation of Mr. Johnston, an intimate friend of Mr. Saunders,

and who had been introduced to me by a letter from that Gentleman a few days only previous to the commencement of this correspondence. After stating, in this letter, the circumstances as related by Mr. Russell, I proceeded in the following manner:—

Feeling how much I am indebted to you for the professional information, which I possess, I leave the business wholly to you. Write to me, and say how I am to act; in whose name it is to be brought forward; and in what manner," &c.

In the answer which I received from Mr. Saunders, I was equally surprised and mortified on observing the following passage:—

Your views can only be the enhancement of your own professional character, whilst mine you neglect, even when your notions originated from the observations made on the case of Mr. Fidkins.

To this most unwarranted and unjustifiable remark, (for in such terms the duty I owe to myself obliges me to describe it,) I transmitted the following answer by the return of the post:—

I declare, most solemnly, I never had an idea of assuming to myself any further credit than having improved the method of treating the disease. What I meant by asking whether it should appear in your name or mine was, whether you had any strong cases to recommend the practice, or whether you could bring it before the Commander-in-Chief officially? No case can be stronger than one of mine the General saw (Frost's case), as he had been inspected by, at least, thirty Staff Surgeons, and, I believe, even by the Director-General; none of whom had the least idea of the complaint.

I also added,

That General Thewles, over and over again, assured me that any improvement of practice would be instantly attended to, and the inventor liberally rewarded, if the plan was to prove extensively useful. He also thought it probable that Government would establish hospitals, and call in all the pensioners to be examined by us. Do not therefore miss an opportunity so favourable as the present. I will act for you as for myself. I will get him to forward any proposition you would wish me, and entirely keep myself in the back ground. If my plan of treatment on trial should be found useful, *do with it what you please, and consider it as your own.* I again declare, sacredly, that I should ever think myself ungrateful and dishonourable, had I acted otherwise than I have done,—namely, asking, and being guided by, your wishes.

Feeling most acutely the unkind and unjust suspicions of my conduct, as expressed by Mr. Saunders in his letter to me, and in the hope of banishing them from his mind, I requested his friend Mr. Johnston to give him an *explanation of the circumstances*, with the whole of which he was acquainted; and by whose advice, together with that of Mr. Russell, I had been entirely regulated. Accordingly, Mr. Johnston wrote to Mr. Saunders as follows:—

I regret to find that our friend Mr. Adams is somewhat uneasy, owing to a late correspondence which he has had with you relative to the Egyptian ophthalmia. Lest you should be led to view his conduct in any other than its true light, he has desired me to write you a statement of the circumstances connected with this affair, so far as they fell under my cognizance; and this I am the better qualified to do, as he made me a *principal party in his councils*.

After stating the representations contained in Mr. Russell's letter, he proceeds:—

This gave Mr. Adams an opportunity of explaining to General Thewles the relation in which he stood towards you; and it was under these circumstances that Mr. Adams wrote to ask your advice as to the line of conduct which it would be proper for him to pursue.

For further particulars of this correspondence, I refer my readers to the special report of the London Eye Infirmary, from which the above extracts have been taken\*.

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\* In the special report of the London Eye Infirmary, in which this correspondence is published, the medical officers of that establishment have thought proper to represent Mr. Johnston as the friend of *Mr. Adams*, instead of *Mr. Saunders*. The only apparent object of stating that gentleman to be *my friend*, on the acquaintance of only a few days, was to give effect to the following unauthorized sentence in his letter to Mr. Saunders, with which I was wholly unacquainted until I read it in the above Report, Mr. Johnston having sent off his letter without shewing it to me, or informing me of its contents. “Mr. Adams seems “to feel very sensibly that he has been wanting in delicacy towards you on “the late occasion; and this has, in the present instance, induced me to become “his apologist. I hope he will never again put himself in a situation to require “one.”

I had no other unpleasant feelings on the occasion, but such as arose from the inconsiderate misconception which Mr. Saunders had been induced to en-

These epistolary extracts readily account for the transient duration of that ill-founded resentment, which had, I doubt not, been artfully instilled into the bosom of Mr. Saunders, naturally the seat of every kind and honourable sentiment. When I disclaimed the idea of anticipating him in the communications of his practice, he did me the justice to believe me; and our correspondence immediately resumed its former tone and character, and continued to the close of his valuable life. About a fortnight previous to his death he executed a commission for me with all his accustomed kindness; and Mr. Milford, of Exeter, who saw him only a few days before he died, assured me, that he retained his regard for me to the last. In a letter from that Gentleman, dated Brighton, Jan. 16, 1815, is the following very pleasing communication:—

It happens to have come within my own knowledge, that the late Mr. Saunders thought well of you to the last period of his life. A few weeks, or rather I incline to think only a few days\*, before his decease (by which professional science sustained so severe a loss), I had a pretty long conversation with him at his house in Ely-place. He spoke of you with *much respect*, and seemed sincerely to rejoice at your professional success, as well as that of our West of England Eye Infir-

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tertain of my conduct. I was not conscious, either on the score of honour or friendship, that the formality of apology was necessary from myself, and therefore could not wish Mr. Johnston to play the proxy on the occasion; and could I have possibly foreseen his design of apologizing, instead of merely giving the explanation as I desired, I should have seriously interposed to prevent its execution. My acquaintance with Mr. Johnston, which had been of so short a date, was in consequence of the following passage, in a letter which he brought me from Mr. Saunders:—"If you have regard for me, shew it by your attention and kindness to the bearer."

How far Mr. Johnston merited the zealous and friendly services, which, it is well known to all my Exeter friends, he afterwards received from me, I shall leave it to others to determine from this act. If he thought my first letter to Mr. Saunders required an "apology," why did he permit me to send it? He acknowledges that he was a "principal party in my counsels;" and, by my letter of explanation to Mr. Saunders, it appears he actually read the letter, for which he here makes an unauthorized and unnecessary apology.

\*This conversation took place only three days before the death of Mr. Saunders.

mary, of which you were then the oculist. I mentioned the warm regard you felt for him, and the obligation you uniformly acknowledged yourself to be under to him, for your acquaintance with the diseases of the eye, and the novel modes of curing them. *At this he seemed much pleased.*

Mr. Saunders died in the beginning of February, 1810. About this time the Egyptian ophthalmia raging in a still greater degree in the army than it had hitherto done, and having also attacked more than a thousand children in the Military Asylum, Sir David Dundas, the then Commander-in-Chief, appointed a Committee, composed of the subjoined eminent professional Gentlemen\* “ to take into consideration  
“ the prevalence of the purulent (Egyptian) ophthalmia in the army, and to determine the best means  
“ of prevention and modes of cure.”

The feelings of respectful deference to the wishes of Mr. Saunders, which deterred me from taking those steps, during his life-time, which had been so strongly pressed upon me by Mr. Russell and General Thewles, were removed by his death, and I did not hesitate to obey the former suggestions of these Gentlemen, to make the Commander-in-Chief acquainted with my success in the treatment of the *third* or granular stage of the ophthalmia. I accordingly had the honour of being presented to the Adjutant-General by the Bishop of Exeter, who, being one of the first benevolent patrons and supporters of the West of England Eye Infirmary, was

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\* NAMES of the GENTLEMEN composing the OPTHALMIA COMMITTEE.

Sir Lucas Pepys, Bart., President.	Thomas Keate, Esq.
Sir Henry Halford, Bart.	Francis Knight, Esq.
Doctor Baillie,	Henry Cline, Esq.
Doctor (now Sir Gilbert Blane, Bart.)	James Ware, Esq.
Doctor Mosely.	J. W. Phipps, Esq. (now Sir Jonathan
Everard Home, Esq. (now Sir Everard, Bart.)	Wallar, Bart.

fully acquainted with my successful practice.—The result of this interview was the express desire of the Adjutant-General, that I should address an official letter to him on the subject, the following copy of which I have recently obtained from the Adjutant-General's office:—

March 1, 1810.

SIR,

After the most attentive perusal of the Report the Adjutant-General did me the honour to enclose, I beg leave to observe, that the particular form of the ophthalmia, to which, from its very destructive nature, I am anxious to call your attention, is not therein even alluded to. It is an effect very generally produced when the disease is not cured during its acute stage; and which a very large portion of those men dismissed the service, labour under. Within these few months from fifteen to twenty of such persons I have perfectly cured, by pursuing a mode of operation first suggested by my late friend and preceptor, Mr. Saunders, and since improved by myself, without meeting a single instance of failure. I have taken the liberty of enclosing the particulars of one of three very bad cases of this kind, which was drawn up by the patient himself, at the suggestion of General Thewles, Colonel Head, of the 13th light dragoons, and several other officers of that regiment, who inspected him and his fellow-sufferers at the West of England Eye Infirmary, at Exeter, an institution of which I have the sole surgical management. These gentlemen considered a knowledge of the practice would be of such great importance and benefit to the service, that they repeatedly urged me to allow General Thewles (the then Commander of the Western District) to forward the enclosed case with other proofs of my success in an official form to you. This, however, peculiar circumstances induced me then to decline.

*In thus voluntarily coming forward, I must beg to state, that the only motives, by which I am actuated, are, in the first place, a desire of communicating highly useful information, AND SECONDLY AN EARNEST WISH TO BENEFIT THE WIDOW OF MY MUCH ESTEEMED FRIEND. In this I hope to succeed, should I be granted the opportunity of proving the utility OF HIS DISCOVERY, of which I am the only one of his pupils who can speak from practical experience.*

During the interview which the Adjutant-General honoured me with two days since, I proposed to him, that a certain number of men, afflicted with this stage of the ophthalmia at the York Hospital, whose names were noted to be dismissed, should be sent down to Exeter, in order that I might have the opportunity of demonstrating, beyond the possibility of doubt, the validity of my pretensions. This he was pleased highly to approve, but I have since learnt, from the assistant surgeon of that establishment, that most of the ophthalmia patients in that hospital have been discharged as incurable. It has recently happened, that from the 9th regiment of light dragoons, now quartered at Exeter, ten men (comrades of Frost, whose memorial I herewith send) have been discharged as no longer fit for service, in the same state of disease as that which he laboured under when he first applied to me—eight of whom, I am fully convinced, admitted of being cured by the same means as were employed upon him.

I therefore, Sir, with great confidence, venture to assert, if all the ophthalmic pensioners in the United Kingdom were called in, and those selected for treatment whose cases admit of being cured, that an immense expense would be saved to the Government, which is now paid to them in pensions, besides restoring to the service a very considerable number of ready-disciplined soldiers,—a measure which humanity as well as policy seems strongly to recommend.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

With the highest respect,

Your obedient humble servant,

W. ADAMS.

To Sir David Dundas,

&c. &c. &c.

I left town for Exeter, where I then resided, shortly after writing the above letter. My proposition was not carried into effect; and I had no intention of renewing the subject, until, on my coming to settle in London the following year, I was professionally consulted by a near relation of the Adjutant-General, to whom I mentioned, in conversation, the circumstances of my introduction to that officer; adding, that my continued, and almost uniform success, in the treatment of the third, or granular stage of the Egyptian ophthalmia, had, in the fullest degree, confirmed my confidence in its general efficacy. This conversation was repeated to the Adjutant-General; and by his especial invitation (conveyed to me by my patient) I called on him at the Horse-Guards; when I repeated my former proposal, that a limited number of soldiers, who were blind from this disease, should be placed under my care, in order that I might prove the efficacy of my practice.

I then received from him the strongest assurances, of the great importance attached by His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, to the obtaining a certain, and generally successful mode of cure for the

Egyptian ophthalmia ; and that *I should experience the utmost liberality, from the department which is more immediately responsible for the health of the army.* I am induced particularly to notice these facts, because my proposal, in regard to the cure of the ophthalmia in the army, has been represented as an act of obtrusive, and indelicate interference on my part, with the official duties of this department.

In obeying the invitation of the Adjutant-General, which was unexpected and unsought-for by me, and in my respectful compliance with the wishes of His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief thus conveyed to me, I considered that I should do humanity a kindness, and the state a service. I then, as now, offered my professional services, and experience, to government gratuitously, without any selfish regard to my private interest ; and I had not at that time the remotest idea, that in doing so, I should offer violence to the feelings of that department, whose wishes, as I was assured by the Adjutant-General, were in perfect unison with those of the Commander-in-Chief. I was strongly impressed with the opinion, that I was not offensively interfering with the province of another department, from the appointment but a short time previously, of the Ophthalmia-Committee already noticed, for the express purpose of taking into consideration the prevalence of the Egyptian ophthalmia in the army, and to determine the “ best means of prevention and methods of cure ;” and also, from my having been informed by a surgeon, who had the charge of a depôt for French prisoners, that in the anxiety of Government to obtain information, they had officially sent to these depôts to ascertain, if the French surgeons

were better informed upon the subject than our own.

I was fully aware, that the particular form of the disease, the third, or granular state, *which is the main and chief cause of the extensive propagation of the ophthalmia*, was but very little known; and after the most attentive perusal of the Report made by the Committee, and enclosed to me by the Adjutant-General, I found, not merely that there was no plan recommended for its treatment, but that it was wholly unnoticed, and not even alluded to, in the very document which, by a General Order from the then Commander-in-Chief, was “circulated for the information of the commanding officers of regiments, and *for the guidance of all medical officers belonging to the army.*”

This was the form of disease which I undertook to cure, and by which the further propagation of the Egyptian ophthalmia could alone be arrested.

I also knew, from extensive practical experience, that numbers of those unfortunate individuals, who had been dismissed the army with pensions, totally blind, and considered incurable by the medical department of the army—a burden to themselves—an expense to the nation—and who were extensively propagating their dreadful disorder among the general population of the country,—that these men could, by the mode of practice which I had matured, be again rendered either fit for military duty, or made useful members of society.

These were the circumstances—these were the motives—which induced me to come forward, when officially invited and encouraged to do so.

But could I have anticipated the numerous unex-

pected obstacles, which during the last five years, have been opposed to the humane wishes of the Commander-in-Chief, the difficulties I have had to encounter, and the calumnies to which I have in consequence been exposed,—I have no hesitation in declaring, that I would at once have respectfully declined, undertaking to prove, by actual experiment, the utility of my practice, for the benefit of the army.

Having, however, as already stated, received the assurances I did from the Adjutant-General, I was thereby induced to lay open my practice to the late Director-General, and a number of army-surgeons, at York Hospital, Chelsea, the establishment in which I first undertook the treatment of a number of blind men, labouring under the third stage of the disease. I demonstrated to them its nature and seat, by everting the eye-lids of some of the infected patients. I operated in their presence, and allowed patterns to be taken, by the surgeons' instrument-maker of the army, of the instruments which they saw me employ, having lent mine to the surgeon of York Hospital, who applied to me for that purpose; while the after-treatment in every respect, by order of the late Director-General of the Army, was daily recorded on the books of the hospital, by the assistant-surgeon appointed to superintend my patients. Notwithstanding all this, and although my practice and my instruments were immediately adopted in the general practice of the army, by the order of the late Director-General, (as, I was informed by the Gentleman who officially transmitted these orders to the different ophthalmia depôts,) such a continued, and apparently organized opposition was instituted, to the orders given by the Commander-in-Chief, that a fair opportunity should be afforded me, to

prove the efficacy of my practice, that nothing but a determination not to be beaten down by a spirit of unfairness, and illiberality, could have induced me to submit to the numerous and continual vexations, which I have since experienced.

Having undertaken what I considered an important duty, from the benefits which I was practically convinced, would result from the adoption of my practice, I felt it concerned my reputation as a surgeon, and my character as a man, to persist in proving the truth of what I had advanced, in defiance of the discouraging circumstances which opposed my progress. They were such, that two years passed away in accomplishing two separate trials of my practice on different sets of patients ; in neither of which having received the justice, due to me, I proposed to the Adjutant-General, (whose uniformly kind, and honourable conduct, alone enabled me to contend in any degree, with the various impediments thrown in my way,) that a *third* trial should be instituted, on the express condition, however, that it should be wholly independent of the army Medical Board, and that the decision upon the benefits to be derived from my practice should, after the result of the trial, be left either to the College of Physicians, or of Surgeons, or to any fixed number of eminent professional gentlemen in the metropolis.

Sir Henry Halford, Doctor Baillie, Sir Everard Home, Mr. Cline, Mr. Ashley Cooper, and Mr. Abernethy, were named, by His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, to form a Committee for the purpose of "taking into consideration my claims to a new and successful treatment for the Egyptian Ophthal-

mia." Eight blind Chelsea pensioners, all of whom had been dismissed the service as incurable, from Egyptian ophthalmia, (some of them for six and eight years,) were selected as subjects for this trial of my practice.

At the first meeting of the Committee, I presented to the gentlemen who composed it, an Essay, containing a description of my practice for the treatment of this disease, in *all its stages*. The Introduction contains the following passage:—

For the first explanation of the nature of the latter or *third* stage of the Egyptian ophthalmia, I am indebted to my lamented friend, Mr. Saunders; but I have been obliged to abandon his mode of treating it, and to substitute another of my own. I believe, however, that he rarely, if ever, succeeded in removing the opacities of the cornea, for which opacities the pensioners are dismissed the service, as those, and not the granulations of the lids, are the cause of blindness. In fact, there is no allusion even, made to this symptom of the disease in his posthumous work, though the granular state of the lids which occasions these opacities is described, and a mode for its removal mentioned.

This trial of my practice was crowned with complete success. Before, however, the Committee had given in their opinions, I sent a letter to Mr. Abernethy, and another to Sir Henry Hallford, the first dated December 5, the other December 6, 1814, which were read also by every member of the Committee. In the letter to Mr. Abernethy is the following passage:—

"A short time before I quitted the tuition of Mr. Saunders in 1807, he saw two cases of the granulations of the lids, and treated both with the curved scissors, and syringed the granulations every three or four days with a solution of nitrate of silver. I have since learned from one of the patients, Mr. Fidkins, linen-draper, Hanway-passage, Oxford-street, that, under this treatment, it was *twelve months* before he was cured, although the disease in the lids was extremely slight, when compared with that which existed in the men whom you this day saw. On my settling in Exeter soon after I left Mr. Saunders, (which was six months before Mr. Fidkins was cured,) I found a number of soldiers there blind from the Egyptian ophthalmia, when I tried Mr. Saunders's practice; but it was so *painful, slow, and inefficient*, that I endeavoured to substitute some other mode of treatment, by which these objections might be avoided. After various unsuccessful trials, I hit upon the mode of slicing off the thickened conjunctiva, in the manner you have seen me carry into effect, by which I can cure this

symptom of the disorder, in its worst state, in five or six weeks, which, by Mr. Saunders's mode, he was unable to accomplish in less than twelve months. A still more important fact remains to be pointed out,—That when I left Mr. Saunders, he had not removed opacities of the cornea, produced by the friction of the granulations of the lids, Mr. Fidkins being free from that symptom.

### In my letter to Sir Henry Halford, I stated—

The only notice taken of this important stage of the ophthalmia, in the posthumous work of Mr. Saunders, is in a note, page 94, where it is particularly observed that “ he preferred the scissors to the knife; and that he prevented the subsequent growth of the conjunctiva, by injecting a solution of alum, or nitrate of silver.” The solution of alum was suggested to him by me, in preference to the nitrate of silver, as being far more efficacious in preventing the re-growth of the granulations, and infinitely less painful to the patient. In many cases the conjunctiva is merely villous, though very much thickened and inflamed. The scissors can then be of no use, as they cannot cut a surface which is nearly smooth. On the contrary, whether the conjunctiva is diseased in a greater or less degree, with a knife peculiarly constructed for that purpose, I can always slice the whole of it off, and lay the tarsus bare. The re-growth may always be prevented by a strong solution of alum, or the application of the sulphas cupri, which, by guarding the cornea with lint dipped in aqua calcis, to decompose the sulphas cupri before it can reach that transparent tunic, it may be used with the greatest safety, and is a powerful and admirable remedy. By these means I can do more in six weeks, than Mr. Saunders did in twelve months, in one of the only two cases under his care while I was with him. In slight cases of diseased lids, such as that of Fidkins, I find the sulphate of copper sufficient to remove it, without the performance of any surgical operation whatever.

*“ For the method of curing opacities of the cornea, without which the removal of the granulations, produced by the roughness of the conjunctiva, can be of no advantage to the sight of the patient, I deny having received any information from Mr. Saunders, or any other person.*

*“ The question then for the consideration of the Committee, appears to me to be this:—Whether the method pursued by Mr. Saunders, or that which I have invented, is best adapted to the practice of the army?”*

I had thus done every possible justice to Mr. Saunders, from whom I first learned the treatment of the granulations of the lids. I fully and candidly stated his practice, with the reasons which compelled me to abandon it. I openly, but by no means presumptuously, claimed an improvement upon his mode of curing the granu-

lations of the lids, and also *originality* in the removal of the opacities of the cornea, the cause of blindness, and of the consequent discharge of those patients, for whose relief I brought my practice before the notice of the Commander-in-Chief; and ultimately submitted to the Committee for their decision, “ *which of the two modes of practice was best adapted for the army.*”

The object of Government, unquestionably, was to possess a certain mode of cure for the form of disease in question. I, was the first person to prove by actual experiment, that it did admit of being cured. In a practical point of view then, the Government is wholly indebted to me, and in no degree to Mr. Saunders, or his successors, for the information they were so anxious to procure, for he died without making his practice known to the Government, or permitting me to do so; and his successors never dreamt of interfering in the subject, notwithstanding the Ophthalmia prevailed so extensively in the army until at the expiration of more than five years after the death of Mr. Saunders, they learned that my practice had proved successful, and that the ophthalmic Committee had given favourable opinions of it.

The gratitude of the legislature and indeed that of mankind at large, to Doctor Jenner has not been lessened, neither the just tribute of applause due to him as a benefactor to the human race been denied, because the effects of the cow-pox were known previously to his having introduced it to public notice, and into extensive practical utility.

Even he, however, had to encounter the hostile opposition of jealous competitors.

The following opinions given by the Committee

were separately transmitted to his Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief; copies of which, by his order, were afterwards officially conveyed to me.

*Copies of the Reports of the Committee appointed by His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, to investigate my Practice for the Cure of the Egyptian Ophthalmia.*

(COPY.)

I AM of opinion that Sir William Adams deserves great credit for his treatment of the Egyptian ophthalmia, (as it is called), in the third and last stage of the disease.

Of the ten patients whom H. R. H. the Commander-in-Chief was pleased to order the Committee to observe, whilst they were under Sir William's management, two were dismissed from ill conduct; the others have all appeared to me, on a very careful examination, to be materially benefitted by the operation which Sir William Adams has performed upon them. From a state of darkness and helplessness, they have been restored to considerable comfort to themselves, and to a degree of usefulness to society—but not as soldiers.

I have not seen Sir William Adams's practice on the first and second stages of the disease.

In the 2d, I understand that Sir William uses the treatment, which is generally adopted by the profession\*. In the *earliest* attacks of the disease, that he pushes a principle already very well known, to a much greater extent than it has been carried by surgeons and physicians before†, and I should think it probable

\* In the treatment of the second, or ulcerative stage of the ophthalmia, my practice differs materially from that of every other practitioner, with which I am acquainted. It especially differs from that, recommended by the Committee appointed by the Commander-in-Chief, in 1810, (of which Sir Henry was a member,) to decide on the best mode of treatment, "for the guidance of all medical officers belonging to the army," as will be seen by referring to the Report itself at the end of this Letter.

† This principle, as far as I am informed, has never before been applied to the cure of the Egyptian ophthalmia. No author, who has written upon this disease, has to the best of my knowledge recommended its adoption, it being *quite opposite* to that recommended by Mr. Saunders, to which it is the most nearly allied, as will be hereafter shewn, which difference I most particularly pointed out in a letter to Sir Henry Halford, dated Dec. 8th, 1814, (two days anterior to the signature of the above opinion), from which the following extract is taken:—

"From the length of time (more than twelve months) since the gentlemen of the Committee read my Essay on Ophthalmia, and my constantly finding the *emetic* practice mistaken for the *nauseating*, I am rather fearful that the distinction be-

that this may be with a proportionately good success, but I do not know it from my own observation.

I give Sir William Adams credit, therefore, but not the merit of *originality*\*, for, in the last stage, his practice is an improvement, only in the operation suggested, and performed with success, by the late Mr. Saunders.

(Signed)

HENRY HALFORD.

Dec. 10th, 1814.

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(COPY.)

ON considering the cases which were submitted by Sir William Adams to my examination as one of the Committee, I think that he has the merit of introducing a practice, which is likely to be highly useful, in a particular chronic state of ophthalmia.

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tween the two principles may not be sufficiently taken into account, I shall therefore take the liberty of again pointing them out.—

You well know, Sir, that nothing can be more *opposite* than the immediate effects upon the constitution of *neausea* and “*violent vomiting*,” which latter effect I consider *indispensably necessary* to the cure of the first stage of the ophthalmia; the *first* being a *sedative*, if I may so term it, on arterial action, by diminishing its force and frequency; while the other, during the immediate act of vomiting, is one of the most *violent stimulants* to the circulation with which we are acquainted, propelling the blood (even the red particles) with such velocity into the most minute order of vessels, as frequently to occasion their over-distention and rupture.

The difference in the doses of the emetic tartar necessary to produce the two actions (*neausea* and “*violent vomiting*”) are as great as the effects of the two modes of treatment on the disease. While *neausea* is kept up by one-fourth or one-third of a grain for a dose, the acute inflammation is lessened in proportion to the diminution of arterial action, but as soon as the remedy is left off, this effect ceases, and the circulation with the attendant inflammation returns nearly to their former state. On the contrary, the *violent vomiting* which I recommend, requires, at the first dose, *two grains* of emetic tartar, and to repeat one-half that quantity every half hour, until full vomiting is produced, which is to be kept up for *eight or ten hours* at short intervals, by giving the same quantity at larger intervals. By this means, the disease is *entirely stopped in ten or twelve hours*, leaving the eye and its appendages *wholly free from any morbid change*; whereas, after blood-letting, and the other modes of treatment, have been carried to the utmost extent, the disease, though it may be thereby rendered more mild, will still run its course, and leave the *conjunctiva much diseased, giving rise to frequent relapses*, and the *further propagation of contagion*. In every instance where it has been adopted by my direction, this practice has proved completely successful. From various quarters I have learnt that other practitioners have been equally successful as myself.”

\* The words employed in the official letter of the Adjutant-General to me were “new and successful.” I never claimed originality in removing the gratulations of the lids.

The state to which I allude is, where the inflammation of the eye, and attending opacity of the cornea, are chiefly kept up by friction of the granulated rough surface of that portion of the tunica conjunctiva which lines the two eye-lids.

As the late Mr. Saunders proposed to accomplish the same object, viz., the removal of this rough granulated surface, by scissors, and actually performed this operation in two cases, the invention of Sir William Adams cannot be said to be quite original. His mode of operating, however, by a knife of his own invention, promises to be much *more efficient*, and to be *more expeditious*\* in accomplishing the cure than that of Mr. Saunders, and likely to preserve the eyes of many individuals, which otherwise would have been lost.

I consider it as my duty to give my opinion with respect to that class of cases only which I have seen, and therefore shall make no reference to Sir William Adams treatment of ophthalmia in its earliest stage†.

(Signed)

M. BAILLIE.

London, Dec. 8th, 1814.

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(COPY.)

Sackville-Street, Dec. 7th, 1814.

THE only part of Sir William Adams's practice upon the patients submitted to the inspection of the Committee, which appears to me deserving of commendation, is the free removal of the granulated surface formed on the inner membrane of the eye-lids.

The cornea in seven of these men has by this means been rendered less opaque than when the patients were first submitted to Sir William's care‡.

The white part of the eye, in all the patients, has a number of vessels upon it carrying red blood; and while, that is the case, the men can only be reported better, but not cured; nor are they fit for any kind of military duty§.

(Signed)

EVERARD HOME.

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\* These were almost the very words which I employed in my letters to Sir Henry Halford and Mr. Abernethy, when claiming a superiority over Mr. Saunders's practice.

† In a previous conversation with Doctor Baillie respecting the different action of neausea, and full vomiting upon the circulation, he fully admitted that the two modes of practice were entirely different.

‡ The cornea in all the eyes upon which my practice was reported, were so entirely opaque when the patients were first placed under my care, that they were unable to see sufficiently to walk without a guide, some of whom had been in that state for *six* and *eight* years: while five of the men read parts of a newspaper with the *most perfect fluency* to the Committee, on the day of examination, and two could read large print.

§ Six of these men were a few months afterwards found fit for military duty, and accordingly did duty in veteran battallions.

(COPY.)

I AM of opinion that the explanation given by Sir William Adams, of the mode in which blindness is produced in the purulent ophthalmia, is correct, viz., that the continued friction of the granulations of the conjunctiva upon the cornea produces vascularities and opacities of the latter, from which blindness ensues.

That, by removing these granulations, the cause of continued friction and contortion is taken away, relapses are prevented, and the total eradication of the disease is produced.

To effect this purpose, the knife appears to be the preferable instrument\*, as it completely removes the whole of the diseased part, and produces the most expeditious, as well as the most perfect cure.

I am further of opinion, that as the vascularity and opacity of the cornea appear to be the most difficult part of the treatment, and the immediate cause of blindness, much danger may be avoided, and time saved, if the granulations are removed as soon as the acute inflammation has subsided, before the opacity has yet appeared †.

(Signed)

ASHLEY COOPER.

London, Dec. 13th, 1814.

(COPY.)

On the 14th February, 1814, I inspected the eyes of ten patients, selected by Sir William Adams. The eyes were inflamed, the conjunctiva granular and the cornea so opaque as to render vision nearly useless.

On the 6th December, eight of these ten patients were produced; one having absconded, and another discharged for disorderly conduct.

Of the eight remaining, five could read a moderate-sized print‡, and two more had recovered sufficiently to distinguish large objects. One had received no benefit.

The successful treatment of these cases appears to have principally depended on the removal of the granular projections of the conjunctiva by excision,—a practice which originated from the late Mr. Saunders, Surgeon to the London Infirmary, for curing diseases of the eye.

(Signed)

HENRY CLINE.

\* It will be recollected, that I employ the knife as an improvement upon the scissors, which Mr. Saunders used.

† Mr. Cooper is the only member of the Committee who gives any opinion of the opacities of the cornea, except Sir Everard Home; although this part of the treatment is entirely my own, and without which the removal of the granulations *after the opacities are formed*, is of no use, as the patient would remain nearly in the same state of blindness as before.

‡ The smallest type in a newspaper.

(COPY.)

*To the Gentlemen of the Committee appointed to examine the Merits of Sir William Adams's Treatment of the Third Stage of a violent and purulent Form of Ophthalmia, commonly called Egyptian Ophthalmia.*

GENTLEMEN,

It seems to me very probable, that the granulated, or carunculated state which the tunica conjunctiva lining the eye-lids acquires in this form of the disease, may prove a cause of its protracted and chronic type; and thus tend materially to produce or increase the opacity of the transparent part of the eye.

*Sir William Adams candidly acknowledges, that he derived both his opinions and the principle of his practice from Mr. Saunders; and from strongly perceiving the necessity of smoothing the inner surface of the eye-lids, he was led to undertake more bold and decisive measures for this purpose than would in general have been adopted.*

The depletion of the blood-vessels (in consequence of his practice) in the first instance, with the subsequent tonic plan of treatment, (both of which are conformable to the general principles of surgery,) appear to me to have restored an useful degree of sight to several patients, whose cases would, in general, have been considered desperate.

I am therefore of opinion, that the practice pursued by Sir William Adams in the third stage of these cases of ophthalmia, is meritorious, and deserving, in general, of a fair and prudent trial.

I have, &c.

6th Dec. 1814.

(Signed)

JOHN ABERNETHY.

Mr. Abernethy begs leave to add, that he would certainly have attended the Committee this day (as he was told it was important) had not Sir William Adams brought the patients to him yesterday morning, and had he not also believed that he should save time to the Committee by thus delivering his sentiments.

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The above opinions *fully established* that I had done Mr. Saunders *every justice* which the *strictest honour* and *integrity* could dictate, and that I had invited the Committee to decide which of the two modes of treatment, his or my own, was best suited to the practice of the army. Four of the six gentlemen determined that *mine was the superior practice*, notwithstanding the removal of the opacities of the cornea, (without which, as already stated, the cure of the granulations is of little or no benefit to vision,) were

not considered or reported upon. As to the implied or expressed opinions, that their removal depends upon the cure of the granulations, it is *wholly inaccurate*; for, in cases where the granulations have been entirely removed for four or five years, and where the requisite means to remove the opacities have been unemployed or neglected, these have remained, occasioning the patient's blindness, nearly in as great a degree, as before the removal of the granulations.

It is well known, that all pensioners dismissed from the service *were blind*, and consequently must have had opacities of the cornea. Now, as Mr. Saunders's practice was *confined to the removal of the granulations*, it could have been of very little service to the pensioners, for whose benefit mine was brought forward; as it is shewn, (by the testimony of Mr. Fidkins,) that Mr. Saunders candidly acknowledged to him, that the violent action of the solution of caustic which he employed *actually produced* ulcers, and consequent opacity of the cornea, instead of removing them. On the contrary, I succeeded in curing *seven* out of *eight* of the pensioners, some blind from opacities *several years*, as will be seen by the following report, descriptive of the state of the men's eyes and vision when placed under my care, and subsequently when they were finally examined by the Committee, to be reported upon.

## REPORT.

The state of the Eyes, blind from Ophthalmia, when the Patients were first placed under my care.

CORPORAL HILL, aged 35, was attacked with ophthalmia in 1807, and discharged the service blind in both eyes in 1808.

I cured one eye two years since, with which he sees perfectly.

In the other the granulations were very large and numerous; the cornea very opaque, and full of large vessels running over it.

VISION.—Could see light from darkness, but no object, however large.

JOHN SCATTENBURGH, aged 27, was attacked with ophthalmia in 1810, and discharged the service blind in both eyes in 1813.

The eyes much inflamed. The lids also much inflamed and granulated. Cornea completely opaque, with very large vessels running over them. An extreme bad case.

VISION.—Could walk no where without being led, and was unable even to distinguish a man, from a woman.

JOSEPH SPARROW, aged 28, was attacked in Egypt in 1801, and discharged the service in 1810, blind of one eye, which was also inflamed.

Lids highly granulated. Cornea opaque, with large vessels running over it.

VISION.—Could see the outlines of an object very indistinctly, but without knowing what it was. Did not see sufficiently to guide himself with this eye in walking.

The present state of the Patients' Eyes.

The granulations are quite removed, and the natural transparency of both eyes restored.

VISION.—Can see to read with the most perfect fluency, the smallest print of a newspaper.

All inflammation perfectly removed, also the granulations, and the opacity of the cornea in one eye. In the other a little film remains, but it does not much impede the passage of light, being on one side of the pupil.

VISION.—Is able to see the second-marks on a watch dial, and read a newspaper.

Inflammation perfectly removed, as also all disease of the lids.

A very slight cloudiness remains, which is daily getting better\*. The enlarged vessels have wholly disappeared.

VISION.—Can read the smallest print of a newspaper with fluency, and perceive the seconds'-marks on a watch-dial.

\* The health of the patients was much injured by the unhealthy and confined situation in which they were lodged, which very much affected the improving state of their eyes, after remedying this unpleasant consequence by a change of

The state of the Eyes, blind from Ophthalmia, when the Patients were first placed under my care.

GEORGE BIRD, aged 40, was attacked in Egypt in 1801, and had repeated relapses until the year 1809, when he was discharged, blind in both eyes.

Both lower lids everted. Lids granulated and inflamed. Cornea opaque with large vessels running over it.

VISION.—For nine months in the year he was so blind as to be led about the streets. During the summer, mild weather enabled his eyes to recover from inflammation, when he could see a little better.

JOHN FREESTONE, aged 37, was attacked in 1809, and discharged blind in both eyes in 1810.

Lids inflamed and granulated. Cornea opaque, with vascularity. A cicatrix existed in one cornea, as apprehended, from the use of caustic.

VISION.—By day he could avoid running against people in the streets, but at night was led every where. He could not at any time see the ground on which he stood, or discriminate any object sufficiently distinct, to know what it was.

The present state of the Patients' Eyes.

Both eyelids cured of eversion.

The lids cured, and the transparency of one eye perfectly restored. In the other, there is a cicatrix or scar, which exists on one side of the pupil.

VISION.—Is able to read the smallest print of a newspaper with fluency, and to perceive the second-marks on a watch-dial.

All inflammation and disease of the lids removed. The scar necessarily remains, and a very slight haziness in the other eye, which is supposed to be the effect of the caustic which had been employed while he was in the army.

VISION.—Can read the smallest print of a newspaper, and perceives the second-marks on a watch dial.

situation, their eyes again became irritated and weakened from the violent purgative effects of some bad Cascarella bark, which was sent from the Army Medical Board for their use; on which subject I reported officially to that Board, and sent samples of the bark for their inspection. The men had not entirely recovered from the effects of this bark, when they were finally reported upon by the Ophthalmic Committee, Dec. 6, 1814. I then stated to the Committee these circumstances, and requested, if they were not perfectly satisfied with my success, they would give me further time, as the men's eyes were now improving equally with their health. Had any red vessels been observable, more than *what are common to the organ*, which, however, by their Reports, were not perceived by any of the gentlemen but Sir Everard Home, the above circumstances would have sufficiently accounted for them.

The state of the Eyes, blind from Ophthalmia, when the Patients were first placed under my care.

**GEORGE BICKLEY**, aged 52, was attacked in 1812, and discharged blind in both eyes.—In one eye, there was a scar before the pupil, which eye was rejected as incurable.—In the other, he was affected like the other patients.

**VISION.**—Was able to walk without a guide, but not to distinguish any small object.

**JOHN SMITH**, aged 40, was attacked in 1810, and discharged in 1812. Was operated upon four or five times in the York Hospital, after I had demonstrated my practice there, but with no benefit.—His eyes were diseased like the others, only worse; and, having caught cold after he came under my care they remained violently inflamed for upwards of six weeks.

**VISION.**—Having been previously under my treatment for some time, he was able to see to walk without a guide, but not to perceive one person from another, or any small object.

**JOHN MILLER.** Is not benefitted in consequence of having been dreadfully purged for eight weeks by some of the same bark, from which Smith and three or four of the others also suffered severely. During this period I operated upon one eye, which is entirely lost, I fear, by the violent inflammation and fungus which resulted. His treatment was, in every respect, the same as the others who are cured; hence the failure must be attributed to the effects of this medicine, and the constitution of the patient, and not to any fault in the practice.

The present state of the Patients' Eyes.

All inflammation removed from the eye and lids.

The scar in the eye most afflicted lessened. While under treatment was attacked with the Walcheren fever, from which, violent inflammation, and an ulcer of the cornea ensued. I was fearful he would have lost the eye altogether.

**VISION.**—Both eyes much improved. With the eye which ulcerated, can see moderate-sized print, and the second-marks on a watch-dial.

He has suffered very much in his health: first, by the unhealthiness of the former lodgings; and secondly, from being severely purged for six or eight weeks, by the bad cascarilla bark, and from the effects of which he has not long recovered. His eyes much benefited, but are not yet well. They are daily getting better.

**VISION.**—Can see large letters, and tell the hour by a watch.

These men were immediately discharged, after their final inspection by the Committee, on the 5th Decem-

ber, without any further treatment ; and some months afterwards were examined, (by a military officer appointed by Government), in common with the other Chelsea pensioners, at the renewal of the war, which was terminated at Waterloo, when *six* out of the *eight* were found fit for military duty, and were accordingly sent to different veteran battalions, in which they served ; until, by virtue of a promise made them by the Commander-in-Chief, when they were first placed under my care, that they should not be again called upon to do military duty, they obtained their discharge from the army.

It is proved, by *the correspondence published in the Special Report of the London Eye Infirmary*, that Mr. Saunders would not himself bring forward his practice for the cure of the ophthalmia, and that my attention to his feelings prevented me from communicating my own to the Government in 1809. The disease, therefore, I may venture to assert, (experience having fully shewn the granulations to be the cause of the frequent relapses, and of the keeping alive and propagating its contagious principle,) was in consequence permitted to proceed, and to propagate its contagion so extensively as to render it necessary for Government, in 1810, to take the steps already mentioned, to endeavour to check its alarming prevalence in the army.

In 1812, (after Mr. Saunders's death,) I was the first person who demonstrated, and proved the general existence of this peculiar form of the disease, to the late Director General and his colleagues, at the Army Medical Board, and subsequently to the medical officers of York Hospital, Chelsea ; who did not hesitate fully and candidly to acknowledge, that they had not been previously aware of the cause of the disease.

*John Parsons, Joseph Winter, John Capel, and David Grey*, were four soldiers on whom the second trial of my practice was made.

*John Parsons* was attacked with ophthalmia, in camp near Badajoz, in June, 1811, and, after the detention of a fortnight, was sent, blind, to the Francisco Hospital, at Lisbon. He there underwent repeated bleedings and blisterings during two months, without any benefit; was afterwards sent to the Isle of Wight, and from thence to the York Hospital, Chelsea. He remained at the latter hospital for twelve months in the same state, when I selected him, an extreme bad case, for the trial of my practice. Various modes of treatment had been resorted to in this man's case since the first attack, but to no purpose; as he could scarcely distinguish light from darkness, and was unable to perceive the largest objects, or to go without a guide, when I first operated upon him. In April, 1812, he experienced some benefit from my operations, but, having discontinued my attendance at the York Hospital, he grew worse. In December, he again became my patient, nearly as blind as ever, scarcely able to see the light of a window. Two months after I operated upon him, he saw with one eye sufficiently to walk without a guide, and the other has since improved, so as nearly to equal the first in power of vision. During the last three months he has distinguished letters, the minute marks on a watch dial, with great clearness, and he walks every where, without the least difficulty, by himself.

His eye-lids never had been properly examined in the manner I examined them; as he declared the surgeons had "never turned up (everted) before," and had always stated that he never could be cured.

*Joseph Winter* was attacked with ophthalmia at Gibraltar, in December, 1807, and was kept in the military hospital there for several months ; as he was not relieved by any of the various expedients resorted to, he was sent home to the Ophthalmic Depôt, at Bognor, where he remained three years and five months, without any benefit from the treatment he underwent, which was directed and witnessed by Dr. Vetch, who never examined the interior of the upper eye-lids, until his return from the York Hospital, in March, 1812, where he had been to see my new operations\*. When he operated upon Joseph Winter and several other men in my way, but quite differently from what he had ever done before. From this treatment, however, Winter received no advantage, for he was as blind when I selected him for the trial of my practice as he had ever been. For six months after the first attack at Gibraltar, he had been unable to bear the light without great pain ; when the inflammation subsided, he could not see the nails on his fingers, or walk without a guide. He remained in this state until eight or ten weeks after I first operated on his eye-lids, when he could perceive large letters. His sight improved daily, and in the beginning of May, 1813 (five months after my first operation) his eyes were cured, he could read print smaller than that of a newspaper, see the minute marks on a watch-dial, and thread a small needle †.

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\* I saw Doctor Vetch at the York Hospital at that period, during the first trial of my practice, which was made in that establishment.

† This man then made a pair of shoes for one of my servants, and has continued to work at his trade ever since.

In the case of *John Capel*, the right eye was attacked with ophthalmia in Spain, in November, 1809, on the retreat with Sir John Moore. On his arrival in England he could merely distinguish light from darkness. He was afterwards sent to Walcheren, and from thence to the Bognor Ophthalmic Dépôt, where he became blind in the left eye. After various treatment under Dr. Vetch, he was told his case was hopeless, was sent to the incurable ward, and remained there two years, when I selected him for my practice. At the expiration of a fortnight, after I had operated on his right eye, he could read print, and thread a middle-sized needle. His sight gradually improved. He could distinguish the minute and second marks on a watch-dial, and his eye became clear from the application he used. His left eye was irreparably gone ; I therefore did not make any attempt to cure it.

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David Grey was the fourth patient on whom this trial was made.

The following is the Copy of a Report of this man's case, which, with those of the other three patients, was compared with the state of the men's eyes, and capability of vision, and ascertained to be correct, by the *five* medical officers of Greenwich Hospital, viz. the physician, surgeon, apothecary, assistant-surgeon, and assistant-apothecary, Jan. 10th, 1814. I requested their examination of the patients, conceiving that justice had not been done my practice in the Report which was drawn up for the information of the Commander-in-Chief, a copy of which incorrect Report, his Royal Highness was graciously pleased to send me.

## REPORT.

The State of the Patient's Eyes when placed under my Care.

Their present State.

*David Grey, 1st Garrison Battalion.*

Violent inflammation in both eyes, which had existed more or less since he was first attacked in 1807. The cornea of each eye was entirely obscured by dense films. The lining of the eye-lids much thickened and granulated. He has been liable to weak and sore eyes from infancy.

*State of Vision.*—He could perceive light from darkness, but was unable to distinguish the *largest objects*, however nearly situated to him. He had been in this state of complete blindness eighteen months in one eye, and three years and a half in the other, and was in different military hospitals, under treatment, since his first attack in 1807.

I took him from the Ophthalmic Dépôt at Bognor, where he had been upwards of two years.

This man's conduct has been disorderly in the extreme, absenting himself, and getting drunk for days together. The inflammation nevertheless is now removed from both eyes. The films completely so in one, but not entirely in the other, which is also rather weaker when exposed to the light. This may be attributed to his irregular conduct; previous to which I considered his, the most promising case of the four.

*State of Vision.*—With his best eye he can read a *newspaper* with fluency, and, as he states, for an hour or two at a time. He is able to discern the minute and second marks on a watch-dial, &c. and appears to see sufficiently well for all the purposes of life.

*P. S.*—The vision in his worst eye materially improved after this inspection took place at Greenwich Hospital.

From the forgoing statements,—from the above official Letters and Extracts,—from the Reports of the state of the pensioners' eyes, when placed under my care, by order of His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief,—from the opinions officially given by the Members of the Ophthalmic Committee upon my practice,—the following facts appear:—

First.—The formation of an Ophthalmic Committee by His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, “*To take into consideration my claims to a new and successful treatment of the Egyptian ophthalmia.*”

Secondly.—That, by substituting a *knife of my own invention* for the scissors employed by Mr. Saunders, and also by using a *solution of alum* instead of a *solution*

*of caustic*, which he employed, it is evident that my mode of curing the third stage of ophthalmia is "*new*."

Thirdly.—That it has been *acknowledged* by the late Director-General, the Medical Board, &c. &c., and *proved* by the testimony of the men taken from the Ophthalmic Depôt at Bognor, that the third stage of the disease (the general existence of the granulations) was wholly overlooked, and unknown in the medical department of the army, until I demonstrated it at the Army Medical Board, and at the York Hospital, in the beginning of 1812.

Fourthly.—That four of the six gentlemen composing the Ophthalmic Committee,—although they have not taken into account, *my discovery of a method for removing opacities of the cornea*, (without which the removal of the granulations will be of little, or no benefit to vision, and, consequently, the soldier affected with them will still *remain unfit for duty, and entitled to pension nevertheless*,) have declared it as their opinion, that *my method* of removing the granulations is an *improvement* upon that of Mr. Saunders, and *better adapted to the practice of the army*.

Fifthly.—That the cure of seven out of eight of the pensioners submitted to my care, in this third trial of my practice, all of them blind from *opacities of the cornea*, and six of whom shortly afterwards *returned to their duty as soldiers*, has established beyond contradiction "*my successful treatment of the Egyptian ophthalmia*."—And,

Lastly.—That the great object which has so long and unceasingly engaged the humane attention of His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, as so materially affecting the "*health of individuals, and the efficiency of the army at large*," is at length attained, in

the discovery of a radical and “generally successful mode of cure” for that dreadful disorder.

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The final examination, by the Ophthalmic Committee, of the cases on which I had operated, in the *third* trial of my practice took place on the 5th of December, 1814; but their written opinions were not transmitted to the Commander-in-Chief until after the 10th of the same month.

On the 16th, to my very great astonishment, I received, by post, a printed circular letter, signed by the Secretary of the London Eye Infirmary, which begins by saying, “that he had been credibly informed, an application had been made by me to His Royal Highness the Duke of York, for a *grant* on account of a new mode of treatment, successfully employed by me for the cure of the dreadful ophthalmia,” &c. He proceeds to state, as he terms them, “two *facts*,” which, he pretends, is “for the assistance of the Board, in their duty as censors.” The first was,—that, being the pupil and friend of Mr. Saunders, “I learned from him the mode of treating the eye in that *state of blindness*, which results from violent destructive ophthalmia, and which is most especially the consequence, or sequel of the Egyptian ophthalmia;” and, after communicating the substitution of another instrument and application, “which from experience was a needless one, that I had signified my intention to Mr. Saunders, to report to Government the effect of the treatment instituted in the cases, of some soldiers afflicted with the disease in question, who had been under my care.”

The second statement, asserted as a “*FACT*,” was

addressed to the public “ more than to the Committee,” the former “ *being liable* (as Mr. Battley says) “ *to a delusion*, in supposing that it is the cure of the “ Egyptian ophthalmia, which Sir William Adams “ has accomplished ; a disease that in its greatest “ severity is only to be cured in a very early stage. “ It is the morbid state in which the organ is left “ after the acute inflammation has subsided, which “ this operation and practice, struck out by Mr. Saunders and adopted by Sir William Adams, undertakes to relieve.” He concludes by saying, that if this statement be admitted, “ the relict of the late “ Mr. Saunders has clearly a *prior* and a *stronger claim* “ to the consideration of Government” than myself.

Having learned that this printed letter, which, it will be shewn, was replete with mis-statements and misrepresentations had been sent to His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, to the first Lord of the Admiralty, to the Directors of Greenwich Hospital, as well as to all the subscribers of the London Eye Infirmary, the members of the College of Surgeons, and even to the Medical Journals, I attended to the suggestion of Dr. Baillie, to rebut these charges of the Ophthalmic Committee, by my letters and statements addressed to them during the trial of my practice, being already well informed of their total want of foundation, as far as related to any injustice on my part towards the late Mr. Saunders.

I accordingly wrote a letter to Dr. Farre, Physician of the London Eye Infirmary, and the intimate friend of the Secretary, being well assured that the latter would not have *dared* to publish such a document as that in question, if he had not been influenced by the former, and his official colleagues. This opinion was

strengthened by the recollection, that one of the professional gentlemen composing the Ophthalmic Committee, and who was intimately acquainted with the Medical officers of the London Eye Infirmary, had at the commencement of my practice on the blind pensioners, dissuaded me, in the strongest and most friendly manner, from pursuing the experiment, notwithstanding the Committee had been formed, and the pensioners were then under actual treatment, alleging that I should “*bring the surgeons upon me.*”

I had not, I confess, at the time, the least suspicion of the tendency of the hint, which was thus kindly given me: but, had I even comprehended its particular object, no apprehension of the consequences to which it alluded would have deterred me from proceeding; conscious of the undeviating integrity of my conduct, and persuaded of the immense benefit I was capable of affording the army, by fully establishing, by actual experiment, the general success of my practice in those cases, of persons who for many years, had been dismissed the service as incurable; and also, that the practice recommended by me, might, if followed up in the manner I had taken the liberty to propose, have effected the total eradication of the ophthalmia from the army.

The utter inaccuracy of Mr. Battley's pretended information at the commencement of his letter,—namely, “that I had applied to the Duke of York for a *grant*, “on account of my success in the treatment of ophthalmia,”—will appear by the following, official letter, from the Adjutant-General, dated Horse-Guards, December 24, 1814, in Answer to one which I addressed to him on the Receipt of the Secretary's printed Letter.

SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22d instant, wherein you request that I will officially inform you, whether you have *directly* or *indirectly* made application to His Royal Highness the Duke of York for a *grant*, on account of a new mode of treatment successfully employed by you for the cure of the ophthalmia ; in reply to which I can have no hesitation in saying, that, to my knowledge, you have made no such application *directly*, or *indirectly* to His Royal Highness \*.

In compliance with your further request, I beg to transmit to you a copy of your letter of the 1st March, 1810, addressed to the Right Honourable Sir David Dundas, Commander-in-Chief, in which you distinctly mention what induced you to come forward, and offer your services for the cure of ophthalmia in the army.

(Signed) HARRY CALVERT,  
Adjutant-General.

This letter to Sir David Dundas, referred to by the Adjutant-General, has been already inserted, page 16. I enclosed a copy of it which I had preserved, to Doctor Farre as a reply to Mr. Battley's. It fully proved that I had from the first acknowledged my being indebted to Mr. Saunders for the *origin of my practice*—that I had claimed nothing in that practice but what four of the six eminent professional gentlemen who composed the Ophthalmic Committee, to whom my practice and that of Mr. Saunders were fairly submitted, *most unequivocally awarded me*, namely, an improvement upon his practice in the removal of the granulations :—and that I had also from the first expressed “ *an earnest wish to benefit the widow of my deceased friend*,” disclaiming all reward or remuneration, for making my practice known for the good of the army.

The Secretary's asserted “ fact,” that I had learned from Mr. Saunders the mode of “ *curing that state of*

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\* At this period I had not had the honour of any personal communication with the Duke of York, neither held communication, or correspondence with any other gentleman belonging to the Horse-Guards upon the subject, except the Adjutant-General.

"blindness *proceeding from the Egyptian ophthalmia*," is equally unfounded as the parts thus refuted by my letter to Sir David Dundas. It has been already shewn by Mr. Fidkins's letter, *that he was not blind*; in whose case Mr. Saunders himself stated, and considered that "my notions originated," therefore that I could not have learned, from his case, to cure a symptom which did not exist. Indeed, by referring to that letter it will be seen, as already mentioned, that so far from Mr. Saunders having *removed* opacities from his eyes, he actually *produced* them from the violent inflammation, resulting from the use of the solution of caustic.

It may perhaps be said, that although Mr. Fidkins had no opacities, and consequently his vision was perfect when he first applied to Mr. Saunders, that, nevertheless, in the general practice of the infirmary, I must have frequently seen opacities of the cornea removed.

To this I reply, that I often did see opacities of the cornea removed in *common inflammation*; but I can with confidence affirm, that the opacities caused by the friction of the granulations, in cases of Egyptian ophthalmia occasioning blindness, are of a different origin and nature from general opacities\*; and that the remedies usually applied to remove the latter, will very often increase and aggravate the former.

From a case of blindness caused by Egyptian ophthalmia, which I have seen since I came to reside in London, there can be, I conceive, no question, that Mr. Saunders regarded the worst cases (such as those of

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\* This opinion is fully confirmed by that of Mr. Cooper, contained in his Report of my practice, inserted page 28 of this Letter.

soldiers dismissed from the army, blind from opacities) as incurable ; at least, if I may be permitted to rely on the statement of the patient, “ that Mr. Saunders repeatedly assured him his case did not admit of a cure ;” This is further confirmed by a fact within my own immediate knowledge and experience :—My present butler, William Dyer, who had been for some years, entirely blind from opacities produced by the Egyptian ophthalmia, consulted Mr. Saunders a few days prior to his death, who proposed operating upon the eye-lids which were everted, as affording him the only chance for the recovery of his sight, but having elsewhere undergone several operations on them, which had proved unsuccessful, he declined the proposal.

He again became a patient of the London Eye Infirmary soon after Mr. Saunders died ; and after three months’ attendance was discharged by the successor of that gentleman, the present senior surgeon of the institution, who was pleased jocosely to remark on the occasion, to the pupils standing by, and in the hearing of the patient, that “ this was a species of case which he understood Mr. Adams undertook to cure ; and, that if he could do so in the present instance, *he ought to get a patent for his process,*” or words to that effect. After asking whether “ he ever expected to see again,” he gave him a prescription for some eye-water, and dismissed him.

The poor man on hearing this casual and sarcastic information, applied to me. He had been able only to discern light from darkness for the preceding four years, during which period, before he went to the London Eye Infirmary, he had been under the care of

the late Mr. Ware for two or three years, who at length declared his case incurable. By my assistance he was however restored to such a degree of sight, that he is able to read and write, and to fill his situation in my service in a very satisfactory manner, although one of the deep-seated membranes of the eye, (a comparatively rare occurrence from the Egyptian ophthalmia,) was rendered in a considerable degree opaque, by the violent and long-continued inflammation under which he laboured, before he became my patient\*.

The next misrepresentation which I shall notice in the letter under consideration, is the affirmation, also asserted as a "fact," "that it is not the cure of the "Egyptian ophthalmia itself which I have accomplished; a disease which in its greatest severity is "only to be cured in a very early stage;" but that it is the mere *effects* only, of the original evil which I am capable of relieving.

The inaccuracy of this statement I also exposed by enclosing to Doctor Farre the following Report, which had been officially delivered to Government, and had been printed for circulation by the particular recommendation of Lord Sidmouth. This Report proves, that *I did undertake* to cure the Egyptian ophthalmia "in a very early stage" even at its very commencement, and also that *I had perfectly succeeded in doing so*.

WE, the Committee for General Purposes of the Workhouse of the parish of St. Pancras, in the county of Middlesex, consider it a duty we owe the public, as well as an act of justice to Sir William Adams, officially to report the complete success which has attended his treatment in the cure of the Egyptian

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\* Any gentleman who may think it worth the trouble to favour me with a visit, for his own private satisfaction, may hear from the man himself a confirmation of the facts, as they are here stated.

ophthalmia, on a large number of paupers belonging to the said parish workhouse, the management of which we superintend.

The Egyptian ophthalmia was first introduced into the house by a female child in the spring of 1811, and, during two years, communicated itself to nearly two hundred persons, notwithstanding the strictest attention was paid to the different regulations recommended, and practised, by one of the most eminent oculists in London, and who, or his assistant, constantly attended the patients.

During that period many eyes were lost, and some of the patients rendered totally blind. The highly infectious nature of the disease was evinced, not only by its extensive propagation among the paupers, but still more, by its having attacked one of the attendant surgeons, several of the nurses, and many other persons who had to do with the apartments, exclusively appropriated to the infected patients.

At the expiration of two years, it appearing, by the monthly reports of the house-surgeon, that the disease progressively increased to an alarming degree, instead of diminishing, the Committee for General Purposes, with the sanction of the General Board of Directors, solicited the professional assistance of Sir William Adams, who, after investigating the nature of the disease, liberally communicated to the house-surgeon a new mode of treatment, which proved completely successful, *by curing the disease in less than twelve hours after its commencement, in every instance where it was administered*; whereby the ophthalmia, within a month after the adoption of his new mode of practice, was effectually checked, and prevented spreading further through the house.

Sir William Adams also proved, to the perfect satisfaction of the attendant house-surgeon and his assistant, as well as to the then acting Committee for General Purposes, that all the patients who had been reported cured, and in consequence were permitted to associate with the healthy paupers of the house, were still labouring under one of the forms of the disease, which, it appeared, had wholly escaped the notice of the former oculist, and was the cause of the frequent relapses by which the infection had spread so extensively, and had hitherto proved so intractable.

For the cure of this stage of the disease, Sir William Adams has also happily discovered an effectual mode of treatment, which has proved, by experience, equally successful as the former\*. In neither practice has there been a single instance of failure; nor has there been one relapse among the patients subjected to his new modes of practice. The disease is now totally eradicated from the workhouse. Seven patients still remain in the ophthalmic hospital, and they are nearly recovered.

As the number of patients cured (many of whom were in the worst state possible) has been so considerable, we cannot but express our decided opinion, and we rest assured, that the ophthalmia, which has hitherto proved so intractable, now admits of a certain and expeditious cure; and, from the very favourable result of the above new modes of practice, we confidently anticipate the great benefit which, by the adoption of these important discoveries, may be derived to the general po-

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\* This refers to an *application* which was employed in almost all the cases at St. Pancras workhouse, as a substitute for any kind of surgical operation.

pulation of the country, by the extermination of this painful and destructive disease.

W. L. DAVIES (Chairman of the Committee,)  
WM. BUNDY,  
NICHOLAS LADLER,  
JOHN HUGHES,  
JOHN HALL,  
WM. INWOOD,  
CHARLES SEWELL.

St. Pancras Workhouse,  
22d Aug. 1814.

It is resolved by the above Committee, that Mr. W. L. Davies, Mr. Wm. Bundy, and Mr. Nicholas Ladler, be deputed to present the above report to His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, to the First Lord of the Admiralty, to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and to the Secretary at War, and to give such further information as may be required.

I have thus proved, as I presume, beyond all contradiction, the *absence of all foundation* for the following charges, contained in Mr. Battley's letter. 1st. The application for a *grant*, on account of a new method of curing the effects of the ophthalmia. 2dly. That I had learned from Mr. Saunders the mode of curing the *state of blindness* resulting from that disease. 3dly. That the public laboured under a delusion, in supposing that I was capable of curing the Egyptian ophthalmia at its commencement. And, 4thly. The making a claim on Government to the injury of the relict of Mr. Saunders. While I have equally proved that I had always readily and freely acknowledged having been indebted to Mr. Saunders for the *origin of my practice*.

For this production, (so actively and widely circulated), Mr. Battley, in a public resolution, received the thanks of the General Committee of the London Eye Infirmary, "for his *spirited conduct* in asserting those "claims" which the Committee adds, "it publicly maintains"!!!

Having, as already stated, put Doctor Farre (and, through him, the medical officers of the London Eye Infirmary) in possession of the above documents, as well as of the knowledge of my practice and conduct, I trusted that his sense of justice, would so far have operated, as to secure me from the continuance of any hostile attacks, from the medical officers of that institution. But my hopes were soon disappointed: the very letter and documents which I sent to him, and which I had supposed would ensure my future tranquillity, were exultingly employed\* as the ground-work of a renewed and more formal attack. The former accusation of having demanded a *grant*, and the insinuations of illiberal conduct towards Mr. Saunders's widow, were now necessarily abandoned. They had been proved notoriously false, and were left to redound to the disgrace of those, who had invented, and propagated them.

These gentlemen had, however, now ascertained, by my letter to Sir David Dundas, the real nature of my communication to Government, and that I had proposed *the establishment of an Ophthalmic Hospital for the cure of the numerous blind army pensioners*. They determined, from what motives of alarm, I shall not pretend to suggest, by every means in their power, to defeat an object, which was obviously pointed out by every principle, of humanity and sound policy.

The three medical officers of the infirmary being, as I say, resolved, if possible, to prevent the expected establishment of the Ophthalmic Hospital by

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\* The gentleman who formerly admonished me of the intended attack "of the Surgeons," has since mentioned to me that it was said, if I had not replied to Mr. Battley's letter, the Medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary "could not have attacked me."

Government, (which, from the successful trial of my practice, I presume they thought it probable would be formed without delay,) in order to accomplish their object, first formed a *Sub-Committee*, under the pretence, that the "Rights of the "Infirmity" were invaded; this *Sub-Committee* appointed these three medical officers to draw up a *Medical Report*, containing *their opinion* of my practice, as compared with that of Mr. Saunders; which was afterwards read over to a *General Committee* of Governors of the London Eye Infirmary, together with a *Statement*, as I have been credibly informed prepared by *the same individuals* who had already prepared the Medical Report. Be this, however, as it may, the General Committee adopted that Statement as its own sentiments, and, together with the Medical Report, it was printed and published, under the following title of—

A Special Report of the General Committee of the London Infirmary for curing Diseases of the Eye; in which certain Pretensions of Sir William Adams, advanced in the Official Papers, published by Order of the Hon. Directors of Greenwich Hospital \*, lately submitted to a Medical Committee, appointed by Government, and affecting the Rights of the Infirmary, and the Merits of the late JOHN CUNNINGHAM SAUNDERS, Esq., its Founder and Surgeon, are examined and disproved, by the Correspondence of Mr. Saunders, and other Documents.

The Medical Report, consists of a laboured examination of garbled extracts, from the correspondence already fully examined in the commencement of this Letter, which took place in 1809, between Mr. Saun-

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\* The medical officers seized this opportunity to render the "Special Report "of the London Eye Infirmary" the vehicle of an answer to the official papers published by your Honourable Board; in reply to which answer, I "*specially*" refer my readers to my work on Cataract, published with this Letter.

ders and myself; also of my Letter to Sir David Dundas, and Doctor Farre. The former Letters were published in an Appendix to the Report. That to Doctor Farre was withheld, as I presume, from my threat of exposing to the world the cruel, and unjust manner in which Mr. Saunders's widow had been treated by those very persons, who, when they endeavoured to injure me, affected so much zeal for her interest and support. Some of these particulars will be hereafter briefly noticed.

The Report closes with the following conclusions, drawn from the supposed facts which it contains.

1st. That the peculiar change of the conjunctiva, produced by the purulent or Egyptian ophthalmia, and causing the blindness which so frequently attends the chronic stage of that disorder, was discovered by the late Mr. J. C. Saunders, the founder of the infirmary, who practised a surgical operation, and employed other means for its removal, and was thus enabled to restore to sight many persons, whose cases had been previously considered desperate; consequently, that the medical officers of Greenwich Hospital, by asserting in the official papers, published by order of the Directors, that the honour of the discovery, and treatment, above mentioned belong to Mr. (now Sir William) Adams, have been led (no doubt unintentionally) to circulate a Statement completely unfounded, and tending to deprive Mr. Saunders of the merit exclusively due to him.

2dly. That Sir William Adams, then a gratuitous pupil of Mr. Saunders, learned from him the facts above mentioned concerning the Egyptian ophthalmia, and that he has only made the unimportant alteration of removing the diseased growth by a different instrument.

3dly. That it was the common practice of Mr. Saunders to employ emetics, in the early stage of every variety of acute ophthalmia. The claim, therefore, of Sir William Adams to originality, rests on no better ground in this, than in the former case.

4thly. That the treatment of the chronic stage of the Egyptian ophthalmia, is simple in its principle, and easy in execution, so that any surgeon, who has received an ordinary education in the treatment of diseases of the eye, may be considered as competent to understand and manage the complaint, *when its nature has been explained.*

In reply to the *first conclusion* of this Report I repeat that it is *not* the peculiar change of the conjunctiva produced by the Egyptian ophthalmia which causes *blindness*, as asserted by the medical officers of the

London Eye Infirmary,—but that it is the opacities of the cornea, resulting from the friction of these granulations, which causes blindness, and such is the fact adverted to; in the following extracts from the Letter of the Medical Officer of Greenwich Hospital to the Directors, to which this conclusion refers:—

In addition to the gratifying contents of the second Report, we think it our duty to state, for the information of the Board, that Sir William Adams has discovered a mode of curing the Egyptian ophthalmia, which has been successfully practised upon several of the pensioners, some of whom *had been blind* for three or four years, and given up as incurable by the most eminent oculists then in London. The communication that this destructive and hitherto intractable disease admits of cure, we conceive will be gladly received by the Board; and the promulgation by Sir William Adams of this important discovery, be considered as a great *national desideratum*.

By the adoption of *his practice* we are of opinion, from what we have seen of its effects, that a very large proportion of the *seamen* and *soldiers* who have been discharged the service, *blind of the ophthalmia*, might be again rendered fit for duty, or be made useful members of society.

It is evident from these passages, that the Medical Officers of Greenwich Hospital allude to the practice of removing the opacities of the cornea, as the cause of blindness, for which, and not for the granulations, men were discharged from the army and navy, and it has been already proved, by the case of Fidkins, that Mr. Saunders's practice, which I witnessed while with him, was not the removal of opacities of the cornea. Indeed, the physician of the London Eye Infirmary, who edited the posthumous work of Mr. Saunders, does not venture to state in it any mode of treatment for the removal of these opacities\*, and even

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\* His words are, "In this essay, the granular state of the conjunctiva and change of structure, which is occasionally produced by this acute inflammation, and which protracts the disease in its chronic form, would have been further considered. He noticed it at the conclusion of chapter 1; and the treatment which he intended to recommend, in the inveterate form of the disease after having long

the other framers of this report are equally cautious not to commit themselves, as the Secretary had done, by asserting, that I learned from Mr. Saunders the mode of *removing opacities of the cornea*, which are the real source of blindness, and not the granulations, as they wish to insinuate.

Hence these "pretensions" advanced by the Medical Officers of Greenwich Hospital in their statement to the Directors, are not "disproved," they being well aware, from their own practical experience, (for they themselves, took charge of the greater part of the blind ophthalmia patients, after having witnessed my mode of treating that disease,) that the removal of the opacities, after the granulations are wholly cured, constitute by far the most difficult, as well as the most essential part of the treatment; and it is evident that it is the *Medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary*, who were incorrect in their statement respecting Mr. Saunders's supposed discovery of curing blindness, &c., in the chronic or granular stage of Egyptian ophthalmia.

These Medical Officers in the *second conclusion*, drawn from their Report, have thought proper to state, "That Sir William Adams, then a gratuitous pupil of Mr. Saunders, learned *from him the practice already mentioned*, concerning the Egyptian ophthalmia, and that he has only made the *unimportant alteration*, of *removing the diseased growth by means of a different instrument*."

My obligations to Mr. Saunders were, it has been shewn, freely acknowledged by myself; but Doctor

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practised it with success, was excision of the granular portions of the conjunctiva. For this operation, he preferred the scissors to the knife; and he prevented the subsequent morbid growth of the conjunctiva, by frequently injecting on it solution of alum or of the nitrate of silver."

Farre, Mr. Travers, and Mr. Lawrence, further affirm, that the improvements which I have introduced, in the cure of the granulations of the lids, are "*unimportant alterations*:"

Sir Henry Halford, Doctor Baillie, Mr. Ashley Cooper, and Mr. Abernethy, are, decidedly of an opposite opinion. The public will determine on the character, and validity of these opposing authorities!!

The *third conclusion* mentions, that it was "the common practice of Mr. Saunders to employ *emetics* in the early stage of every variety of acute ophthalmia; and that the claim of Sir William Adams to originality rests on no better ground in this, than in the foregoing case."

I beg my reader's particular attention to the following inconsistencies.

On the 16th of December, 1814, it was affirmed, in a printed circular letter, under the *signature* of Mr. Battley, Secretary of the London Eye Infirmary, (and which, as I have already stated, that person would never have *dared* to publish, without the knowledge and approbation of the Medical Officers of the Eye Infirmary,) that "it was *not the Egyptian ophthalmia* which Mr. Adams undertook to cure, as that disease is only to be cured in a very early stage." This incorrect assertion was followed, with increasing inaccuracy, on the 24th of the same month, (after I had proved that I actually *did undertake to cure, and had cured, the disease in its earliest stage, namely, at its very commencement*,) by the declaration, of the same individuals, that Mr. Saunders also employed *emetics*, in the incipient stage of *every species of acute inflammation*.

In the Report itself, the physician endeavours to  
 “ recall to my recollection, that I was taught at the  
 “ London Eye Infirmary the curative powers of  
 “ emetics, in the acute forms of ophthalmia;” and  
 that, “ among the formula kept at the Infirmary,  
 “ none were more constantly used by Mr. Saunders,  
 “ at the commencement of acute ophthalmia, whether  
 “ of the external or internal tunics of the eye, than  
 “ simple solution of tartar emetic, so administered as  
 “ either to nauseate, or produce full vomiting. His  
 “ correct reasoning on the latter effect of this remedy  
 “ will be found in his Essay on Inflammation of the  
 “ Iris, which was first published in the Medical and  
 “ Physical Journal of the Year 1806\*.”

The following are Mr. Saunders's words, in the  
 above Essay :—

“ Our object is therefore to impair the force of the heart, and nothing will  
 more completely accomplish this intention than the abstraction of blood. What-  
 ever other means medicine furnishes may be employed with the same view.—  
 It may therefore be right, after the exhibition of cathartics, to employ the tar-  
 tarised antimony, in moderated doses, in order to enfeeble the pulse. If vomiting  
 be excited by it I see no cause of regret, as the straining of the eye in the act of  
 vomiting is more than compensated by the weakness of the pulse, which a state of  
 sickness, (*nausea*, I presume, Mr. Saunders means,) produces.”

Now, what was the formula alluded to by Dr. Farre  
 in the Special Report, as kept in the Infirmary? Two  
 grains of emetic tartar, dissolved in half a pint of  
 water, two or three table-spoonfuls of which were  
 given every three or four hours to *keep up nausea,*  
*but not to excite vomiting*; the patients being di-  
 rected to *discontinue the medicine whenever vomiting*  
*was produced by it.* This mode of employing the  
 medicine, as I have learned from several gentlemen

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\* See Page 10 of the Special Report, &c.

acquainted with the practice of the Infirmary, is still continued in the manner prescribed by Mr. Saunders.

I never knew Mr. Saunders administer an emetic at the commencement of any inflammation of the eye, much less for the cure of the Egyptian ophthalmia; on the contrary, while I attended his Infirmary, it was his *invariable direction* that the medicine should be discontinued *as soon as vomiting was produced*; and, from the above passage in his essay, it is quite obvious, that he regarded the *straining of the eye* as an unfavourable circumstance.

That it was the *nauseating* and not the *vomiting* practice which Mr. Saunders recommends, is further proved, by the fact well known to every medical practitioner, and of which Doctor Farre could not have been ignorant, (or he would be very unfit for the situation he holds), that the effect of *nausea* upon the system is to *lessen the force and frequency of the circulation*; thereby producing an effect similar to the *abstraction of blood*, so strongly recommended by Mr. Saunders.

I shall now give the substance of a paper in which I described *my practice*, and which I published in the Medical and Physical Journal for June, 1813, in consequence of that practice having been erroneously reported upon by three Army Surgeons, appointed by his Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, "to inquire into my success in immediately putting a stop to the Egyptian Ophthalmia at its very commencement." These gentlemen, like the officers of the Eye Infirmary, *notwithstanding my particular explanation of their difference*, had reported the two modes of practice (the *nauseating* and the *emetic*) to be the same. I sent copies of this Paper, after its publication, to the Adjutant-General and to these Army Surgeons. The

latter *did not venture to reply*, thereby *fully admitting* its accuracy. My words are:—

The diminishing the action of the heart and arteries by inducing *nausea* is a practice which most professional men have pursued, in lessening acute inflammation in various parts. It is not therefore a matter for surprise that it should have been tried in a disease where this character is so strongly marked as in the Egyptian ophthalmia; but I know of no one who has recommended *violent vomiting* to be excited and continued in the manner I have described; although it is probable that vomiting may *accidentally* have been produced even by small doses of the medicine, when given to produce nausea.

To produce nausea, a *quarter* or at most a *third* of a grain of the tartar emetic is exhibited for a dose once in *three* or *four* hours to an adult; whereas, in my practice, I should direct *two grains* to be given at first, and *half that quantity* to be repeated every *half-hour*, until *full vomiting* is produced, which is to be kept up for *eight* or *ten* hours, by repeating the dose at longer intervals.

The effect of *nausea* is to lessen arterial action; consequently, during its existence, inflammation in any organ or viscus must be diminished; but I believe its further progress has been very rarely if ever immediately arrested by so gentle an operation of the medicine.

The intentions I had in view, in adopting the practice in question, were *first*, by the *violent excitement of vomiting*, to produce a *new action* in the inflamed vessels, whereby the *morbid action*, constituting the disease, would probably be removed. *Secondly*, by keeping up *continued sickness and vomiting* for so many hours, considerably to exhaust the animal and vital powers, whereby the circulation would become so languid, as almost to amount to syncope, during which it is impossible that inflammatory action can proceed\*. By having recourse to the remedy as early as possible, before the disease could establish itself, it occurred to me, that not only the morbid action would be removed, by inducing a different action; but, by the long-continued sickness, and consequent exhaustion, all disposition to a recurrence of inflammatory action would be removed. The event has most fully answered these expectations; as in no one instance, in which I have known the remedy employed, (in conformity to the rules just laid down,) has it failed of success.

The *nauseating practice* has indeed also been tried by different surgeons in the army, during the period the Egyptian ophthalmia raged so extensively among the soldiery; and in a Report drawn up by three professional gentlemen, appointed, by his Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, to inquire into the probable efficacy

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\* The idea of this practice originated from the effects of some hours continued sea-sickness upon myself, which were precisely what I have described above. I resolved upon imitating it, in order to cure violent acute ophthalmia; which practice I had soon after an opportunity of successfully trying upon a number of persons in St. Pancras workhouse, affected with the Egyptian ophthalmia.

of my practice, if introduced into the medical practice of the army, they also intimate the two modes of treatment to be similar, although I explained to them, at the conference I had with them on this subject, the important difference both in their intention and effect.

The above quotations from Mr. Saunders's Paper, published in the Medical and Physical Journal in 1806, and from mine, which appeared in the same periodical work in 1813, render it obvious, that *his mode of practice* in the treatment of acute inflammations of the eye, and that which *I have pursued for the cure of the Egyptian ophthalmia at its very commencement, are entirely opposite.* His object was to *lower* the action of the heart and arteries, as a *sedative*, if I may use the term, to the circulation; while mine, *on the contrary*, was to *increase in the highest degree* their force and frequency, in order to excite a *new action* in the inflamed vessels, and thereby *at once* to destroy inflammatory action, which can only be effected by the most violent stimulus to the circulation\*.

And here it may be asked, if, in 1813, I had published Mr. Saunders's practice as a discovery of my own, why did not Doctor Farre, at *that period*, come forward to claim it for Mr. Saunders, as he has since endeavoured to do? it being barely possible, that he should not have seen or known, of my publication, and the practice it promulgated; a contro-

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\* The practice of Mr. Saunders (the nauseating practice) is by no means peculiar; but keeping up *violent vomiting* for *eight or ten hours* in the manner which I have directed, (in order to imitate sea-sickness,) is a mode of cure which, as far as I can learn, no one but myself *has ever practised.* Indeed, from its severity, I consider it more peculiarly applicable to public practice; and although, were I again to be attacked with Egyptian ophthalmia, I should employ it on myself, I have never ventured to adopt it on patients in private practice.

versy having been maintained respecting both its novelty and efficacy, for nearly twelve months, during which period six or eight Papers (I believe) were published, on the subject, in the Medical and Physical Journal. But I have reason to think there was no suspicion, in 1813, either that a "grant" was about to be bestowed upon me by Government for the cure of ophthalmia, or that it was probable I should be placed at the head of an ophthalmic hospital; whereas, in 1814, *things had assumed a different appearance.*

The result of the trial of my practice on the pensioners had now proved successful; and favourable reports had been given of it to his Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, by the Ophthalmic Committee; the contents of these reports, *it is more than probable*, had reached the ears of the Medical Officers of the Eye Infirmary, two of the Ophthalmic Committee being the friends and colleagues of the surgeons of that Institution.

The misrepresentations (to use no harsher term) contained in the three first conclusions of the Report of the Medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary, "for the *candour* and *impartiality* of which, as well as for the *accuracy* with which they had examined the documents submitted to their inspection," they, in a public resolution, "received the thanks of the General Committee," have been as fully exposed in the foregoing pages, as the inaccuracies in the previously printed Letter of their Secretary, which are in several particulars at variance with each other.

The *fourth conclusion* of the Medical Report,—namely, "That the *mode* of treating the *third stage* of the Egyptian ophthalmia is simple in its principle and easy in execution," and "that any surgeon, who has received an ordinary education in

“ the treatment of diseases of the eye, may be competent to understand and manage the complaint, “ *when its nature has been explained,*”—perfectly coincides with my own opinion.

There can be no doubt, but that, among the surgeons of the army, there are gentlemen who have received the most liberal education, both general and professional; and I have no hesitation in declaring my conviction, that there is *no public service*, which can boast of so much talent, and respectability as our own, in regard to professional attainments, while experience has proved that we are indebted to the army, for many of our most eminent surgeons and physiologists. In the present day, some of the most difficult and rare operations, have been first successfully performed by surgeons belonging to the army. Notwithstanding these facts, it is however equally certain, that highly competent as they are, and always have been, in every other respect,—the treatment of diseases of the eye, has heretofore formed only a very small part of their professional education.

I took the liberty, in 1812, of pointing out to his Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief (whose anxiety for the welfare of the army is universally known and acknowledged) the great benefits which would result to the public service, if the young army surgeons were instructed in ophthalmic, as well as general surgery. For this purpose I ventured to propose, that if those, among the numerous blind pensioners, whose cases admitted of cure, were called up for treatment, the hospital in which they were placed should be made an ophthalmic school, where lectures on all the most important diseases of the eye should be delivered.

This measure appeared to be necessary, from the melancholy fact that some thousand soldiers had been dismissed the service upon pensions, blind from ophthalmia, the cure of a considerable number of whom my experience had proved to be practicable. It was my language, in my first interview with the Adjutant-General, more than five years ago, that “if these men admit of being cured, subsequently to their discharge from the army, (as my success had incontestably demonstrated,) that were the army surgeons instructed in the necessary modes of treatment, they could equally be relieved before their dismissal, whereby their services and pensions might be retained.”

Hence it is obvious that I was the first person to suggest that important improvement in the medical education of the young army surgeon, which is now not only acted upon, but, in the printed medical regulations of the army recently issued by the present Director-General, is actually held out as an indispensable qualification. It has been also proved that I was the first person to demonstrate to the late Director-General, and to the Army Medical Board, the nature and seat of the granulations of the eye-lids, and their appropriate mode of cure.

Indeed, that eminent and candid physician, Dr. Vetch, whose practice contained in his excellent treatise on the Egyptian Ophthalmia, has, in a great degree, heretofore regulated that of the army, subsequently sent me a polite and gratifying message, by an army surgeon, thanking me for the introduction of a practice into the army, which promised to be so highly beneficial.

If, therefore, the army surgeon is now capable of curing this description of case, “after its nature has been explained,” it is to me the Government is indebted for the information.

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The following are the names of the Gentlemen who composed the General Committee of the London Eye Infirmary; together with a correct copy of the prominent parts of the “Statement,” founded upon the Medical Report whose accuracy has been just examined.

At a Meeting of the General Committee of this Charity, held at the Infirmary,  
on Wednesday, December 28, 1814:

PRESENT:

Sir CHARLES PRICE, Bart. President, in the Chair.

John Ansley, Esq. Ald.	Rev. Samuel Crowther.
Harry Sedgwick, Esq.	H. Kensington, Esq.
Solomon Hougham, Esq.	John Cazenove, Esq.
Michael Bland, Esq.	S. S. Hunt, Esq.
John Bainbridge, Esq.	George Clark, Esq.
John Hodgkinson, Esq.	Thomas Churchyard, Esq.
John Twemlow, Esq.	D. D. Davis, M. D.
T. D. Croskey, Esq.	Robert Gooch, M. D.*
Ralph Price, Esq.	J. R. Farre, M. D.
William Brydon, Esq.	Benjamin Travers, Esq.
John Smith, Esq.	William Lawrence, Esq.
William Crawley, Esq.	Richard Battley, Esq.
Richard Wace, Esq.	

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\* This gentleman, actuated by the most honourable feelings, on hearing part of the contents of the Medical Report read at the meeting of this Committee, withdrew in disgust; but to his surprise afterwards found his name affixed to a public document, the nature of which he utterly disapproved. With these circumstances (although we were strangers to each other) he thought proper to make me acquainted, through the medium of an eminent physician, our mutual friend. He afterwards called upon me, when I shewed him my letters to the Ophthalmia Committee, and their Reports, and explained to him the difference between the *emetic* and *nauseating practice*, which he fully admitted, and declared that the latter, and not the former, was the practice pursued at the London Eye Infirmary. At a subsequent visit he told me, he had informed Doctor Farre of the contents of the documents I had shewn him, and the purport of our conversation respecting the emetic practice; notwithstanding which, in a second edition of Mr.

## Prominent Parts of the Statement read and adopted at the above Meeting.

First. The ready attention of His Royal Highness the Duke of York, the Commander-in-Chief, to certain claims of curing the Egyptian ophthalmia, advanced by Sir William Adams, and the appointment of some of the most distinguished members of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, to ascertain, by direct observation, the practicability of curing certain men, rendered unserviceable by this disease, are proofs of the great solicitude of His Royal Highness, and of His Majesty's Government, to promote the happiness, and to secure the usefulness of the soldier.

These unfounded claims however of Sir William Adams to the discovery or improvement of a method of curing the Egyptian ophthalmia, of which *it has been shewn that he was neither the discoverer nor the improver*, infringe the rights of this Infirmary, at which he was merely a student, and the merits of the late Mr. Saunders, under whom he was only a gratuitous pupil.

Secondly. The General Committee is forcibly struck with the early developement of a plan, which may be traced through all the papers, official and unofficial, viz. in addition to an expected donation, proved by No. IV. in the Appendix, an intended proposition to Government to establish Hospitals, and to call in all the pensioners to be examined, and attended by the party interested. This purpose (for private emolument, so honourably rejected by their Surgeon, the late Mr. Saunders) produces an unchanging language through the documents IV., V., VI., and the paragraphs at pages 4 and 5, of the Greenwich Official Papers.

Thirdly. The successful treatment of the *acute* and chronic stages of the Egyptian ophthalmia at this Infirmary, *at which Sir William Adams was taught the method*, which he has submitted to the scrutiny of the Medical Committee appointed by Government, forms an essential part of the claims to public favour, on which the Governors of this invaluable charity rest their pretensions.

After *kindly* offering to Government, upon the condition, however, "of an *adequate contribution from the national purse*," the use of the Infirmary for those purposes, the utility of which I had, by three separate trials of my practice, fully established, the last statement concludes as follows :—

Fourthly. "This proposition, on the plan of an equivalent, is not suggested as a bar to any personal donation, which the generosity of Government might bestow on the relict of the late John Cunningham Saunders, Esq., the Founder of this Infirmary, and the discoverer of the practice \*."

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Saunders's posthumous work, just edited, Doctor Farre refers to the Special Report of the Eye Infirmary, and makes a quotation respecting the nauseating practice as grounds for charges against me, although, from Doctor Gooch, he was fully aware of their total want of foundation!!

\* It is worthy of remark, that in the printed letter, bearing the signature of the

The medical officers, from whom I have reasons to believe this statement altogether emanated, although sanctioned by the signatures of gentlemen who no doubt considered that statement well founded, think proper to assert,—that I am not an “*improver*” on the practice of Mr. Saunders; while four of the highest professional authorities in the kingdom have declared themselves to be of a contrary opinion. *They* have determined the question with respect to my pretensions\*.

*Secondly*, As to my conduct, in 1809, which is alluded to in the reference made by the Committee to “No. 4 in the Appendix,” Mr. Russell’s letter, page 10, bears the most *unequivocal* and *decisive* testimony of its perfect honour and delicacy towards Mr. Saunders. And here I appeal, not merely to the candour, but to the common sense of my readers, whether any passages in my letters to Mr. Saunders, can be made by the most malignant perversion of words, to convey such a meaning, as the Committee have been blindfoldedly persuaded to assume.

The General Committee also refer to a letter written by me to Sir David Dundas, then Commander-in-Chief, dated March 1, 1810, from whose contents they deduce, that my conduct had been influenced by

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Secretary of the Eye Infirmary, and dated *Dec. 16th*, when it was supposed that *I* was about to receive a *grant*, great anxiety is expressed for the interest of the “relict” of Mr. Saunders; but on the *24th of the same month*, after it had been ascertained that I had *proposed the establishment of an Ophthalmia Hospital*, the “relict” is but barely mentioned at the conclusion of the “Statement,” while the “importance and success of the Infirmary” is largely dwelt on, and the *generous offer* is made of it to Government; upon the condition however of “*obtaining an adequate contribution from the National Purse!*”

It would appear that a *change of circumstances* required a *change of measures*.

\* See the Reports of the Ophthalmia Committee, page 25.

selfish and interested motives\*. That document the Committee could never, I presume, have considered ; and from misapprehension alone of its contents, could have been induced to become the instruments of any censure upon my conduct.

In that letter I *most fully and emphatically* disavow, all remuneration for *myself* ; but *specifically* mention my earnest wish to benefit *Mrs. Saunders*.

Equally unjustifiable are the insinuations, that the Directors of Greenwich Hospital, and its medical officers, could have lent themselves to any object in my favour inconsistent with their own honourable characters, or which had not, as their exclusive object, the great design of that hospital, the benefit of its inhabitants, and the general interests of humanity ; or would have attested any but proved and well-authenticated facts.

*Thirdly*, The declaration that I was taught the successful treatment of the *acute and chronic stage* of the Egyptian ophthalmia at the London Eye Infirmary, which I had submitted to the scrutiny of the Medical Committee, appointed by Government, has already been unanswerably proved *wholly destitute of foundation*.

*Fourthly*, In respect to the application to Government in behalf of the relict of Mr. Saunders, it is shewn by my letter to the Commander-in-Chief in 1810, that I had anticipated them by more than four years.

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\* In a letter which I have received from the Adjutant-General, dated June 28, 1817, is the following passage :—

“ His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief entertains a just sense of the  
“ zeal and liberality with which you communicated your modes of practice ; and  
“ recollects the candour with which you uniformly spoke of the merits of the late  
“ Mr. Saunders.”

*To this statement, however, the Committee gave the sanction of their names, and resolved on its publication, together with the Medical Report! and also that a deputation should be appointed to wait on His Royal Highness the Duke of York with these papers, and the offer of the Infirmary for the benefit of the army, as has been already mentioned.*

In answer to this deputation, His Royal Highness was pleased to observe, that it was not for him to determine, from whom the mode of curing the Egyptian ophthalmia originally proceeded; but that I was the first person who had demonstrated to his satisfaction that the peculiar form of the disease was susceptible of cure. This His Royal Highness was pleased personally to communicate to me. The First Lord of the Admiralty informed the deputation, that he should be entirely governed by the decision of the Commander-in-Chief.

The following letter contains a very gratifying assurance of His Royal Highness's sentiments, in regard to the attacks made on me from the London Eye Infirmary:—

SIR,

*Horse-Guards, 3d Jan. 1815.*

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th ult., with its enclosures, and to assure you, that the contents of the papers, to which you allude, have left no impression on the mind of His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief *unfavourable to your character or professional pursuits.*

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

To Sir William Adams,  
&c. &c. &c.

Your most obedient servant,

H. CALVERT,  
A. G.

In the following year, Lord Palmerston, (whose firm

and honourable conduct in every stage of this business I feel myself called upon most gratefully to acknowledge,) stated to the House of Commons, that Government had taken into consideration, the expediency of calling up the numerous blind pensioners, for the purpose of putting them under my care. At the same time he expressly disavowed entering into the question of, who was the original inventor of the mode of cure, a question, which had been much agitated elsewhere. Nevertheless, a paragraph in a newspaper, as I have been informed, attributed language to Lord Palmerston which he never employed, and this paragraph originated, and prompted the hopes of a *second deputation*, which waited upon him, and the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

It had now received the addition of several Members of Parliament, who were Governors and Patrons of the Institution which it represented. But this effort was not more successful than the former. Lord Sidmouth, and Lord Palmerston, had perused the Reports of the Ophthalmia Committee on my practice, and formed their decision in my favour.

I had thus, by obeying the invitation of the Adjutant-General, and by my respectful acquiescence in the humane wishes of His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, as conveyed to me through the Adjutant-General, in 1811, brought upon myself *four successive attacks* from the London Eye Infirmary: *First*, Mr. Battley's letter; *secondly*, the Special Report of the General Committee; to which may be added, the two successive deputations, to the different departments of Government.

However evident it may be that the above causes, to-

gether with the "Official Papers," published by order of your Honourable Board, have principally contributed to the publication of the Special Report of the London Eye Infirmary, yet we may look to some more direct, and immediate exciting cause, for the conduct of its medical officers. It will probably be found in the two following letters :—

(LETTER I.)

*Homerton, 2d February, 1815.*

DEAR SIR,

IN conformity with your request, I beg leave to state the circumstances attendant on the operations performed on my left eye, for cataract, by Mr. Travers.

In the Spring of 1812, I placed myself under Mr. Travers's care, in order to undergo the operation of couching the cataract, who accordingly performed it, which confined me to my room eight days. A fortnight afterwards, a second operation was performed, from which I suffered very acutely, and it was followed by severe inflammation, which confined me to my room ten days.

My sight was now much worse than before any operation was performed, and, after the delay of some months, a third operation was proposed, which I was given to understand would be the last.

This also I submitted to, and, as soon as it was completed, Mr. Travers asked me if I could discover any object with it, and, on my answering in the negative, he said, "If that is the case, I am afraid we can do nothing more for you."—The inflammation, which followed this operation, also was very severe, requiring the employment of various means to remove it. Three months after this, having called upon Doctor Farre, that gentleman told me, it sometimes required more than three operations to remove a cataract, when I accordingly again applied to Mr. Travers, who performed a *fourth* operation; but very little benefit resulted from all these, as I could only perceive light with this eye.

Four months afterwards I again called upon him, and proposed to undergo a *fifth* operation, so anxious was I to recover my sight. He assented to it, remarking, "That, if it did not succeed, I should be only where I was," or words to that effect. I told him, before the operation, that if, by making a greater pressure with the instrument it would answer a more effective purpose, to do so, and not to regard the pain it would give me, as I would much prefer it to the frequent repetition of the operations. He smiled, but made no reply.

This operation was most severe, and I shall never forget its effects; as for two days and nights I was in the utmost agony, and for four days and nights I scarcely got an hour of natural sleep. None could give a better description of my sufferings than the servants who attended me at the Guildhall coffee-house.

Six months more had elapsed when Mr. Travers proposed a *sixth* operation, which, from my anxiety to do something to support my large family, I was almost

inclined to submit to, had not the recollection of my late severe sufferings at length made me diffident, which feeling was increased by the recollection that Mr. Travers, upon every occasion, spoke with very little confidence of the probable favourable result of the operations.

A few days after my last interview with Mr. Travers, I accidentally met Dr. M——— a gentleman nearly related to a most worthy and esteemed friend of mine, who inquired very anxiously about my sight; and on learning what I had endured, and all to no purpose, desired me to call upon him, when he put into my hands your book on Diseases of the Eye, and one of the Official Reports published by order of the Directors of Greenwich Hospital; adding, that you were then in France, and that I ought by all means to consult you on your return. This was the first time in my life that I had ever heard of your name; and after getting your Observations upon Cataract read to me, as well as the account of the surprising cures performed upon the pensioners, I thought it a duty I owed to my family, and an obligation to Dr. M., who had so kindly interested himself for me, to consult you on your return from Paris. I did so, when, without hesitation, you pronounced that the impediment to sight might be removed by one operation, which was of quite a different kind to that usually practised at the London Eye Infirmary.

In communicating your opinion to my family and friends, all of them concurred that it was my duty (after having submitted to five operations during two years and nine months, without deriving the least benefit from them, and scarcely receiving an encouraging hope, even if I did undergo a sixth by Mr. Travers) to place myself under your care; you therefore accordingly performed the operation on the 20th October, 1814, (at my lodgings in Bond-street,) which was less painful, and of much shorter duration, than either of Mr. Travers's, and from which not the slightest inflammation resulted.

Immediately after the operation you tried me with a glass. I told the time by a watch, and the next day I read a paragraph in a newspaper with distinctness. On the third day I took a walk in the Park, with merely a shade on my eye, and on the following day returned to my wife and family, to their great astonishment, as well as to that of all my friends in the neighbourhood.

From the kind attention paid to me by Mr. Travers, during his operations, and from being a subscriber and friend to the Eye Infirmary, (an institution which I much approve, and shall ever encourage,) I called upon Mr. Travers, three days after my return, (seventh after the operation,) in order to shew him the wonderful success of your operation, and with the intention of explaining to him the difference between your operation and instrument to his; being then convinced, as I still am, that, had he performed *five times five* operations, in the manner he had done upon me, the result would have been equally unsuccessful.

The reception, however, which I experienced from him, was such, that the object of my visit was quite frustrated, by what I considered an unprovoked and unmerited abuse, both of you and myself, unworthy of further mention; but some part, however, I think myself bound in honour and gratitude to you to state to the world, my having been, I am fully persuaded, the chief and innocent cause of those attacks, which you have experienced from the London Eye Infirmary. This opinion is confirmed by what has come to my knowledge from other quarters.—He, after declaring that you could not have cured me by one operation, had it not been for his previous ones, said, that other patients had left him, and gone to

you, in a similar manner, before; "but, now that his mind was made up to take "public notice of him, (Sir William Adams,) he should do so, and that too in a "way which he little expected, and which he (Mr. Travers) would do without "delay." He then requested me to call upon Dr. Farre, to state to the Doctor what I had just stated to him; but his unexpected behaviour did not merit an acquiescence on my part to comply with his wish, and I therefore declined doing so.

*The Special Report of the London Eye Infirmary was soon afterwards sent to me.* This publication brought strongly to my recollection the threat of "taking public notice of you in a way you did not expect."

That I had a right, and without any breach of delicacy to Mr. Travers, to form my own determination who should perform a *sixth* operation after five had failed, is a fact so obvious, that I merely mention it in order to shew the folly which *professional feelings* will sometimes drive even men of ability to commit. That I have waited and borne every part of Mr. Travers's treatment with patience is also known by my having remained under his care for nearly three years, during which long attendance I in consequence lost a very lucrative appointment (a fact well known to the gentleman who first mentioned your name to me;) and when it is considered that I had a wife and five children wholly dependent upon my personal exertions for support, no reasonable person, I think, can throw any other blame upon me, than for having remained so long under Mr. Travers's care as I did.

With respect to yourself, I solemnly declare that I sought your advice, and in common with other patients applied to you at your house, and that you never in any conversation attributed a want of skill to Mr. Travers, but blamed his mode of operating; and, further, that had you declined operating upon me, (which you conscientiously could not do), the recollection of my sufferings at, and after the last operation of Mr. Travers had fully determined me never again to submit to it.

The above narrative is to the best of my recollection minutely correct, which I am ready to attest under the most solemn obligations; and in giving this to you, to employ in any manner you may think proper, I conceive I am only doing what honour, justice, and gratitude, demand of me.

I am, dear Sir,

Your obedient humble servant,

To Sir William Adams.

THOMAS CORLETT.

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## LETTER II.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am more sorry than surprised at the groundless accusations that have been brought against you in print, for your conduct towards your late preceptor, Mr. Saunders. These attacks, which are obviously set on foot by jealous and interested individuals, you must expect. I incline to think it would be wisest to take little or no notice of them. They are the natural consequence of successful merit, and in that light I conceive they must in general be regarded.

During all the time you were oculist to the West of England Eye Infirmary, I

know you habitually embraced every opportunity both in public and in private, in print and in conversation, to extol the professional merits of Mr. Saunders, and to acknowledge your obligations to him. This I recollect distinctly, both during his life-time and after his decease; as also that I once or twice hinted to you there was no necessity for your bringing it forward on every occasion, and repeating it so very often. Of course the charge now brought against you, must appear to me one of the most extraordinary that your rivals could have thought of.

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I remain invariably,

My dear Sir,

Most truly yours,

SAMUEL FREDERICK MILFORD.

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Of the importance of my mode of practice to the welfare of the army, I shall venture to assume that there can be little doubt. The granulations already so often, but never, I trust, unnecessarily mentioned, it is now generally known and admitted, cause the frequent relapses which are observed to occur, when the patient has been infected with the Egyptian ophthalmia, and account for the difficulty formerly experienced in eradicating the disease, when it had once found its way into a regiment. By these frequent relapses, the infectious principle is generated *de novo*; and, as I have been informed from official authority, twelve months since, there were at that period 4,300 men who had been dismissed the service blind from this disorder, upon pensions. From the great increase of the disease within this period, in that part of the British army stationed in France, as well as from the number of troops which have been since disbanded, it is not improbable that the number of ophthalmic pensioners is increased to 4,500. Allowing one shilling per day, or 18*l.* 5*s.* per annum, for each man, which calculation is admitted to be within the sum paid;

(a private, blind in both eyes, receiving 1s. 3d. ; a corporal, 1s. 8d. ; a serjeant, 2s. per day,) it will stand thus:—

£4,500	
18	
36,000	
4,500	
81,500	
1,125	The Extra five shillings.
82,625	
5000	Artillery pays this amount by official returns.
87,625	
5,000	Pensions to Officers in the Army and Artillery.
£92,625	The total amount paid out of the national purse.

Thus then the enormous sum of *ninety-two thousand six hundred pounds* is paid annually out of the national purse, to soldiers who have been blinded by the dreadful pestilence in question.

From my success in the cure of *seven* out of *eight* of these very pensioners which was fully proved by the Report of the cases, officially submitted to my care in the third and last trial of my practice\*, and upon which cases the opinions of the Ophthalmic Committee were founded, there can be but one opinion of the wisdom and humanity of adopting the measures which I have proposed.

Waving every consideration of humanity, it surely is an object, of great importance, in point of *national economy*, that the expenditure in pensions should be diminished. I have at the present moment an ophthalmia soldier under treatment, a young man, who, having claimed the right of pension for blind-

\* See page 31 of this Letter.

ness, was placed under my care by order of Lord Palmerston. By my mode of treatment, he was enabled to read small print to his Lordship within seven weeks; his cure will save to Government 18*l.* 5*s.* per annum, for the life of the patient, and his maintenance, had he been in a military hospital, would not have exceeded 5*s.* 3*d.* per week. Similar instances of my perfect and rapid success in cases, where the eyes have not been entirely destroyed, have very frequently occurred since I began my practice in Exeter, in 1809, immediately before my correspondence with Mr. Saunders\*.

In respect to making my practice known to Government, a measure originally suggested to me by Mr. Russell and General Thewles, it may be said, that had I then published it, every advantage would have been derived which I myself could have accomplished had an ophthalmic hospital been established for the cure of the pensioners. To such a conclusion I have to answer—*First*, that, I was prevented from publishing, in consequence of Mr. Saunders's disinclination to have the practice in question made known except by himself.—*Secondly*, That a copy of Mr. Saunders's posthumous work, describing the granulations of the eye-lids, and proposing a mode for their cure, had been *officially presented* to the late Army Medical Board; agreeable to a resolution which was passed at the London Eye Infirmary. Nevertheless, as already stated, when I was first referred to that Board

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\* The patient Frost, who gave rise to this correspondence, immediately lost his pension of 22*l.* 15*s.* per ann. in consequence of my having cured him.

by the Adjutant-General, some time after Mr. Saunders's posthumous work had appeared in 1811, and ventured to assert the practicability of curing the granulations of the lids, together with the opacities which had been caused by them, occasioning blindness, I was treated with ridicule, and even insult, by the late Director-General, until I demonstrated, by producing patients whom I had *actually cured*, the truth of my pretensions, and then the conviction of his former erroneous opinions, induced him repeatedly to acknowledge, that he was not aware of the general existence of the form of disease in question; in fact, that he knew nothing of the nature and seat of the granulations, till he saw me evert the upper eye-lids, an operation which he declared he had never before witnessed. Nay, it was afterwards asserted to me, by the surgeon of the York Military Hospital at Chelsea, that any promise of removing the opacities of the cornea, would be in direct contradiction to every established pathological principle\*.

Here then it must evidently appear, that if I had not *absolutely proved by my own practice*, the possibility of curing them, any publication of mine, would have been as unnoticed as that of Mr. Saunders.

As already stated, my practice was immediately adopted

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\* The invariable language held to me by every army surgeon, with whom I conversed on this subject, during the first trials of my practice, was, that my curing Parsons would equally convince them of its efficacy as the cure of any number of cases. The opacities in this man's eyes were so dense and extensive, that I was dissuaded from selecting him by the late Director-General, whose candour upon this occasion induced him to declare, "it was too bad a case for a fair trial of my practice." After his vision was sufficiently restored for every purpose of life, he was accidentally met by the Director General, who, the patient informed me, would scarcely believe him to be the person whom he, and the medical officers at York Hospital, had so confidently pronounced incurable.

throughout the army ; patterns of the instruments which I employed were given to the surgeon of York Hospital, as copies for the army instrument-makers. My practice was also recorded fully and minutely in the journals of that establishment, where I had first operated in the presence of a great number of army surgeons, and my treatment in every respect was officially forwarded to the surgeons of the different Ophthalmic Depôts throughout the kingdom, for their general adoption.

I have also learnt, from several of the pupils of the London Eye Infirmary, that, *even in that institution*, my practice is preferred to that of Mr. Saunders, the *knife* being now substituted for the *scissors*, to remove the granulations ; and the *solution of alum* for the *solution of caustic*, the latter application having been found generally to excite so very severe a degree of inflammation in the eye, when injected upon the raw surface of the internal membrane of the eye-lids.

I published the *emetic practice* in 1813, immediately after I was assured of its efficacy. Thus humanity has not suffered by a delay on my part to communicate my practice ; while it cannot be denied that the perseverance with which, for the last five years, I have urged the expediency and necessity of the proposed measure, has caused a degree of attention to the subject which no publication of mine could have excited.

This perseverance produced the *third* trial of my practice, in 1814, and the formation of the Ophthalmic Committee, to witness and report upon it.

The opinions given by this Committee, upon its nature and efficacy, as contrasted with that of Mr. Saun-

ders, having, as already stated, been officially delivered to the Commander-in-Chief, he was pleased, with the Secretary at War and the Adjutant-General, to inspect the patients, upon whom the trial had been made, at the Horse-Guards; where I attended to explain the nature of the disease, and the practice for its removal. His Royal Highness humanely, and condescendingly, inspected the men's eyes, and was so perfectly satisfied with the result of his inquiries, that he was pleased most graciously to express to me, his entire approbation of the success of my efforts; in which sentiment of approbation, he was joined by the Secretary at War, and the Adjutant-General.

In consequence of this satisfactory trial, as well as of the proofs previously adduced of my general success, it was the determination of the Commander-in-Chief, in conjunction with the Secretary at War, and the Secretary of State, for the Home Department, to make a simultaneous effort, to exterminate the Egyptian ophthalmia, not only from the Army, but also from the kingdom. This latter determination, arose from the communications I had previously held with Mr. H. Addington, (at the instance of a Baronet, whose grandson's eyes I preserved from the destructive effects of this pestilential disorder, which he had caught at a private school, where several gentlemen's sons lost one or both eyes from it,) who did me the honour personally to assure me, that Lord Sidmouth, so entirely approved of the plan which I had submitted, for the *total eradication* of the disease in question, that he had actually spoken to a distinguished Member of the House of Commons, to bring the subject before the notice of the

Legislature\*. This measure was deemed necessary, from the frightful extent to which the ophthalmia had propagated itself among *all classes of society*, in consequence of the dismissal of so many soldiers from the service, labouring under the third, or granular stage of the disease, before its seat and nature had been explained by me to the Medical Department of the Army.

It appears, also, that only a few months afterwards, the ophthalmia burst forth with such violence in that part of the British Army of occupation in France, that, for more than eight months, there were from 150 to 250 patients, and upwards, constantly in an ophthalmic hospital established in Cambray, during which period scarcely a soldier belonging to the battalion of the Coldstream Guards, quartered there, escaped its pestilential influence in a greater or lesser degree†.

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The practice pursued in the army for the cure of the Egyptian ophthalmia, previously to the adoption of mine, was very large, and frequently repeated abstractions of blood. From a statement in a note contained in Dr. Vetch's valuable treatise, already referred

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\* About this period I had the honour of an interview with that enlightened Philanthropist, Mr. Wilberforce, respecting the subject in question. He fully concurred with me in opinion as to the expediency of adopting some legislative measures to eradicate the disease in question, before it became too deeply rooted to admit of doing so; and even intimated a disposition to interfere in the investigation himself, had he not been deterred by indisposition and by previous Parliamentary engagements.

† I have received this information from two sources, of such undoubted authority it may be considered as official.

to, it appears, that it was not unusual to take as much as three hundred and sixty ounces (or thirty pounds) of blood from the same patient, notwithstanding which active practice, according to a statement made by Mr. Peach, the surgeon of the 52d regiment, in which this practice originated, and was most extensively pursued, that regiment lost within the first year fifty men blind in both eyes, and forty more blind in one ; and the disease could not be conquered for upwards of two years and a half, during which period 1341 cases (including relapses) occurred.

I now very particularly request my readers to refer to the St. Pancras Report, page 41, of this Letter, in which it will be seen, that by the adoption of the *emetic practice*, instead of the large bleedings, I succeeded in curing all the acute cases of the same disease in a "few hours" without the loss of a drop of blood ; by which means that malady was effectually checked within a month or six weeks, which had resisted for upwards of two years, the utmost efforts of that eminent and skilful oculist, the late Mr. Ware. It will also appear, that by removing the granulations, which were found to exist in every patient who had been attacked with the disease, for any length of time, (but which previously had been wholly overlooked, thereby causing the difficulty of its eradication,) the malady was entirely banished from the work-house, not *one* case of failure having occurred in the treatment of either of its stages, as officially attested by the Gentlemen composing the House Committee, who frequently inspected the patients that had been submitted to my treatment.

Hitherto I have considered the subject merely in a

*financial* point of view, and as far as it respects the effective state of the army ; but there are other views to be taken of it, which humanity loudly calls on us to notice. Of all the painful and distressing complaints to which the human eye is subject, the Egyptian ophthalmia is unquestionably the most severe. The anguish produced by it I have myself felt, and can therefore speak from personal experience ; and I have repeatedly heard army surgeons declare, that they have seen the most brave and resolute soldiers, evince the feelings of children under their sufferings, and even fervently to pray for a termination of their existence.

As this horrible pestilence was brought into the army, not from any fault of the soldier,—not from the accidental effects of climate, or atmosphere,—but from *specific contagion*, to which he was exposed while in the discharge of his duty, he clearly has the strongest claims upon the humanity of government that an effort should be made for his relief, now that, by the most *undeniable experiment*, it has been proved, that this dreadful malady *does admit of an effectual cure*\*.

Another consideration which ought not to be disregarded, is that in consequence of the numbers of infected soldiers who have been dismissed from the army, the disease in question has been extensively propagated among all classes of society, and threatens to become as general, and frequent a disease as any

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\* The humane intentions of Government in regard to the blind pensioners, are about to be carried immediately into effect, by the calling them up for treatment according to the plan which I have had the honour to propose.

which is now prevalent in the British islands. The ophthalmia was totally unknown in this country until brought hither by the troops on their return from Egypt in 1801. To the circumstance of the general existence of the granulations of the lids having been unknown, many thousands of the general population of the country may doubtless ascribe incurable blindness, arising from this disease\* ; and the mischief so far from decreasing, is daily increasing. The seeds of the pestilence, have been too widely disseminated to expect its natural eradication, and nothing but legislative interference can effectually put a stop, to what threatens to become a *national calamity*. The population at large have therefore an equal claim with the soldier, upon the humanity of government.

In order to give an adequate idea of the contagious nature of the Egyptian ophthalmia, it may not be amiss to state the numbers which have been attacked by it, in a few of the many public establishments of the metropolis, in which it has made its appearance. The surgeon of the Military Asylum states, in a publication on the subject, that during seven years, in which period the disease broke out from time to time, in that establishment there were from 1000 to 1200 children

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\* While in Dublin, a few years ago, I was consulted by a country gentleman of large fortune, who had been attacked with the Egyptian ophthalmia a few days before, but he applied too late to obtain relief, I found both eyes irrecoverably destroyed by the violence of the disorder.

One of my first patients on my return to London was a gentleman, who contracted the disease in one eye, while passing through a crowd of blind persons collected at the door of a celebrated empiric, and notwithstanding he was attended by the most eminent oculists of the day, the vision of that eye was entirely lost before I saw him, and he has since repeatedly experienced the most severe sufferings in it.

I have even seen a mother, and two of her children entirely blind from this disease.

attacked with it, many of whom lost one, or both eyes.—In the charity schools of St. James's parish, 170 out of 200 were attacked. In the Welsh Charity School, 70 children suffered.—In St. Pancras workhouse, 200.—In a school at Lambeth, 100.—In St. Martins', St. Giles's, and, as I have been informed, Mary-le-bone work-houses, the ophthalmia has at times prevailed in a great degree. As one proof, among many, of the manner in which it spreads, even from one house to another, I some time since visited a court near Sloane Street, consisting of eighteen or twenty houses, in which there was not a woman or child who escaped its violence during one whole summer\*.

In Christ's School, the disease has prevailed for the last two or three years, and it is said, there were between three and four hundred boys attacked with it at the same time, last year†.

In manufacturing districts, the ophthalmia have been informed, has spread in some instances to a great extent. There is scarcely a populous town in the kingdom, from which patients have not applied to me. And in a number of private schools and families, in and about London, this disease has raged with great violence.

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\* I was lately consulted by the family of a respectable tradesmen. The father, mother, five children, and the servant, were at the same time labouring under the Egyptian Ophthalmia, which was caught at an Eye Infirmary, to which one of the children had been sent, for some trifling complaint of the eye.

† I have been consulted by the father of one of these boys, who nearly lost his eyes from the disease in question, which was communicated to him by his son on his return home during the vacation; and he mentioned to me, that the mother of another boy was similarly infected about the same time as himself, who, it was reported had actually lost one or both eyes.

In a letter now before me, written by the assistant-surgeon of a regiment of 800 men, then under orders of embarkation for Spain. He says,

The disease was introduced into the regiment, as I have reason to believe (been informed) by a soldier's child, who brought it from another regiment. When I joined the battalion there were not above twenty patients in the hospital for ophthalmia, but within five months, more than two-thirds of the regiment were attacked; and, notwithstanding every possible effort was made to prevent its spreading, it nevertheless attacked nearly six hundred men, before its contagious progress could be arrested\*.

This occurred at the period, when the great effort was made to reinforce the Duke of Wellington's army, consequently the valuable services of this regiment were lost, during the remainder of the Spanish campaigns, as I have since learnt it was nearly two years before the disease was entirely got rid of.

It will naturally be asked, whether it be possible, or probable, that any effectual remedy, can be applied to so great an evil. It is seen by the official documents contained in this letter, that in every instance where I have been called upon to treat this disease, since 1809, my practice has been *invariably successful*; and surely it will not, in candour, be deemed presumption on my part to suppose, that it would prove equally so, if it were tried upon a general and exten-

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\* I am informed it has very recently been again officially reported, that the ophthalmia is "conquered in the army", there being but *very few cases* of it now existing among the troops in France.

It is here seen the extensive mischief which a *single case* is capable of producing; and from the facts already stated, it is sufficiently proved how utterly inadequate the means hitherto employed, have been to *eradicate* the disease in question from the army, however, it may occasionally have been checked, or "conquered." The plague at certain seasons of the year, is not known to exist, in places the most infested with it, but no one ventures to assert, on that account that it is effectually conquered.

sive scale. I therefore, do not hesitate to express my firm belief, that the Egyptian ophthalmia might be totally and permanently eradicated from the army, and from the kingdom, by the adoption of those plans which I have had the honour to submit to his Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief, the Secretary at War, and to the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Two objections may perhaps be urged against the execution of the latter part of this great undertaking, which I so confidently assert to be practicable.

First.—That the enactment of the legislative measures, necessary to carry my plans into effect, might infringe upon the liberties of the subject. Secondly, that from the highly contagious nature of the disease, it would still continue to disseminate itself in the army, and among the general population of the country, before by any effort, it could be entirely eradicated.

In reply to the first objection I will state, that no legislative enactment will be required, which is not fully recognised in, and acted upon, by the quarantine laws with greater severity, than would be necessary to exterminate the disease in question ; whose contagious power and destructive severity, have in many instances been as fatal, as far as respects the *vision* of the sufferers, as the plague or yellow fever have been to the *lives* of the persons attacked with those dreadful pestilences.

The arguments which were successfully employed against the general inoculation for the cow-pox, in no respect applies to this measure ; for although forcing a parent to inoculate his child with a disease, the safety and efficacy of which he doubts, would be to

exercise a degree of tyranny over the opinions and feelings of the subject, which the spirit of the English constitution could neither authorize or countenance, yet surely to prevent any person from spreading the plague or any other fatally infectious disease among the general population, cannot possibly be deemed an encroachment on the liberty of the subject.

I answer the second objection, by stating that one of the chief means to be employed in the extermination of the ophthalmia, would be to afford such necessary information to every professional man throughout the kingdom, as will enable him to treat the disease in a manner to destroy its infectious principle.

This I pledge myself may be done with the greatest certainty of success ; and from the excruciating sufferings which attend the acute form of the Egyptian ophthalmia there can be no question, but those afflicted with it, would, without the necessity of resorting to compulsory measures, gladly and immediately apply for relief, wherever and in whatever manner they were certain of obtaining it.

Very little expense would attend the execution of the plan which I had the honour to submit to Lord Sidmouth, and which met with his entire approbation. This plan is so simple in its nature, and so evidently practicable, that I am persuaded it would be very generally considered by others in the same favourable point of view as it has been by this humane and enlightened Statesman.

I trust, my Lords and Gentlemen, I have fully proved by the foregoing relation of facts, and the documentary evidence adduced, that in coming forward as I have done with plans for the total eradication

from the army and the kingdom of a newly-imported disease, which, from not having been understood, and from having been neglected, threatens to become a national calamity, (equally with the small-pox or venereal disease, which have been also imported into this country,) that I have disinterestedly endeavoured to promote the interest of my country, as well as that of universal humanity; and that in doing so, no part of my conduct, either moral or professional, has, in any degree, merited censure, still less any rancorous or malignant feeling.

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It is with a considerable degree of reluctance, that I revert to the hostile conduct of the medical officers of the London Eye Infirmary, by mentioning an attempt which was made to injure me in the opinion of some of the subscribers to that Institution, immediately after the death of the late Mr. Saunders. The senseless absurdity of this attempt is so evident as to render it unworthy of notice, were it not that a publication of the falsehood, has been held out as a threat, if I replied to the Special Report of the London Eye Infirmary; its authors well knowing, a reply, if made at all, would fully expose their disgraceful misrepresentations. I have learned that it was actually sent for insertion (together with a copy of the Eye Report), to whet the critical acumen of one of the editors of a Medical Journal, the justice of whose criticisms I shall investigate in the Supplement to this Letter; but even this editor thought the accusation too contemptible to be admitted into the pages of his Journal. I must bring my readers acquainted with the circumstances

which led to this unprovoked attack, in order that they may understand the full extent of its object.

It has been proved by the renewed and friendly correspondence between me and Mr. Saunders, and by the conversation respecting me, which took place a few days only before his death, (detailed in Mr. Milford's letter, page 15,) that he regarded me to the last with respect and affection. I therefore heard with the utmost surprise, within a few hours after my arrival in London, that his colleagues at the Eye Infirmary had expressed hostility towards me. I was assured, by a mutual acquaintance, that to my success at Exeter this might be attributed ; a success which had been spoken of by them in a manner, to occasion, at times, unpleasant feelings, even to my deceased friend and preceptor. The information of this hostility induced me to request Mr. Milford's brother, a warm supporter of the London Eye Infirmary, to negotiate for me, with Doctor Farre, a business in which I was then much interested.—It was this :—Mr. Saunders, eleven months before his death, had announced in one of the Annual Reports of the Infirmary, and which was circulated all over the kingdom, his intention, shortly to publish a work which would communicate generally to the profession, those improvements he had already imparted to me. The following are his words :—

“ In addition to the remarks in the last Medical Report, which I had the honour of submitting to your consideration, permit me to add, that my process for curing the cataract in children, together with other observations relative to the eye, which *I am about to publish as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made*, has been freely communicated to *an individual* ; and the ample scene of experience which this Infirmary affords, opened to his view, from a disinterested wish to promote his

professional object. Mr. *Adams* has since settled in Exeter, and there established a charity on the model of this Institution," &c.

Mr. Saunders died before this task was completed ; but I knew that the work was in a considerable state of forwardness. After his death, it was my wish to have become either the editor, or the joint editor of his posthumous work. Knowing that I was in fact the legitimate successor to Mr. Saunders, none of those practising as oculists, having ever, even seen him operate on cataract, I was persuaded, that by adding to it, in notes, the result of my own experience, I should materially increase its value and public utility ; and, also, having it then in contemplation to settle in London, which I actually did the following year, I conceived, that it would introduce me to the profession, and the public, as the confidential pupil and friend of that eminent surgeon, whose loss was so generally and so justly deplored, and, consequently, tend to give me professional reputation.

The precise nature of this proposal is explained in the following letter, with which Mr. J. Milford has politely favoured me :—

DEAR SIR,

In compliance with your request I state the substance of the conversation at your interview with me in 1810, relative to the transactions at the London Eye Infirmary, in consequence of the death of Mr. Saunders. I perfectly recollect on your arrival in town, for the purpose of attending the funeral of that gentleman you expressed to me your desire of being the *editor* of his work, which you understood was in forwardness for publication ; stating, that by becoming the *editor* of such work, it would furnish you with an opportunity of introducing notes of your own observations in your practice, and thereby tend to give you professional reputation.

You also stated, that to obtain this permission from Mr. Saunders's widow, or his executors, you would with pleasure present her with £100.

You requested me, in consequence of my having attended meetings of the Governors of this Charity, to communicate your wishes to the *Committee* or *friends* of

*Mr. Saunders.* I soon after accidentally met a gentleman who had taken an active part in the Charity, to whom having explained your wishes, he intimated to me that the officers of that Establishment, and who had undertaken the entire direction of the concerns of Mr. Saunders, had so much resentment or prejudice against you, that any such proposal would meet on their part with the most violent opposition. This opinion, I believe, I soon after communicated to you, as I do not recollect that I afterwards adopted any measures on the subject of your proposal.

I am,

Yours very truly,

JOHN MILFORD.

*London, March 15th, 1815.*

To Sir William Adams.

Mr. Milford *did* communicate this opinion to me, and also that he had not taken any further steps in the business. I therefore endeavoured to see Doctor Farre myself, to repeat my proposal in person, and with the intention, if possible, to explain away the prejudices I found he had conceived against me, and which I was conscious of not deserving. On my way, some days afterwards, to his house for this purpose, I accidentally met, at Mrs. Saunders's house, with an acquaintance, a young man who had succeeded me in acting as assistant to Mr. Saunders, and to whom I mentioned the above circumstances. I failed in my attempt to see Doctor Farre, but finding Mrs. Farre at home, informed her that I had commissioned Mr. Milford to propose my *editing* Mr. Saunders's work, and requested she would mention my wishes to Doctor Farre.

Shortly after these conversations, I heard from several quarters that the most injurious reports were circulated, "that I had endeavoured to get at Mr. Saunders's notes in order to rob him of his posthumous fame." To prevent further misrepresentations of my conduct and motives, I therefore addressed to Doctor Farre the following letter, explanatory of the nature of

those propositions, which I had requested Mr. Milford to make.

(COPY.)

February 28, 1810.

SIR,

I AM strongly urged by my friends, before I leave London, to commit to paper, for your perusal, the proposals I requested Mr. J. Milford to make to you, relative to the unfinished work of my much-lamented friend Mr. Saunders, at which period both Mr. Milford and myself were entirely ignorant of its being about to be published at the expense of the charity. This step they deem absolutely necessary, in consequence of the flagrant misrepresentations of my wishes and intentions that have been circulated. Entertaining the highest possible respect and attachment towards the late Mr. Saunders, I was anxious that his name and character should be handed down to posterity with every possible mark of deference and respect, due to his superior talents and acquirements, and that his widow should be benefitted to the utmost, by his well-merited professional reputation.

Impressed most warmly with these sentiments, I requested Mr. J. Milford to state my willingness to co-operate with you in any manner you might consider the most conducive to fulfil those intentions ; that Mrs. Saunders should, as a matter of course, receive all advantages arising from the publication of the work—in addition to which I was ready to pay her an equivalent, if her friends expected it, for being permitted to add the result of my observations and experience, either in the form of distinct notes, or an appendix, which I conceived would have added both to its value and public utility. This proposition I did not deem either improper or presumptuous ;—first, having enjoyed the *peculiar advantage* of his unlimited confidence in his modes of practice ;—secondly, having extended the principle of his operation for cataract, to the cure of that disease complicated with closed pupil\*. The alteration I have made in the needle he was in the habit of employing while I was his pupil, and which I communicated to him, he seemed to approve, by his having, as I have been informed, latterly adopted it. Indeed Mr. Saunders most liberally admitted, in one of his letters to me, that it was well adapted to execute the principle of his operation, but the fear of its breaking made him hesitate to use it, which I endeavoured in two or three subsequent letters to do away with, by assuring him I used no other kind for the last twelve months. Also the trials I instituted to ascertain the best method of treating those persons afflicted with the secondary symptoms of the Egyptian ophthalmia, I consider of some consequence ; but I most solemnly declare, that nothing was more distant from my mind, than the wish to raise my own reputation at the expense of his. My astonishment then was extreme, when I found it reported, that I had “endeavoured to get at Mr. Saunders’s notes, for the purpose of

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\* This improvement Mr. Saunders fully admitted in a letter with which he favoured me, a copy of which is inserted in my work on Diseases of the Eye.

"robbing him of his posthumous fame." No misrepresentation could have been more unfounded, malignant, or unjust.

In the earlier part of my stay in London, I felt the greatest wish to explain myself personally to you on this subject; but the deep-rooted prejudice, which I heard from *every quarter*, you had imbibed against me, rendered such an interview impossible.

Having now, Sir, fairly and fully stated the ideas and feelings that actuated my conduct towards my late friend and his widow, I take my leave of you, hoping that your actions and motives in this business have been, and still will be, guided by the same disinterested purity that has influenced

Your obedient servant,

W. A.

About ten days after the date of the foregoing letter, after my return to Exeter, I received an official communication from the Secretary of the London Eye Infirmary, enclosing, as he stated, "with the individual approbation of a Select Committee of that Institution, in consequence of my letter to Doctor Farre," a communication which, he added, "was made before that Committee," and made by the young man already alluded to, whose name I shall not here expose in print, from a regard to the feelings of some of his family with whom I am intimately acquainted. The substance of his communication was,

"That I had mentioned to him I considered it would be most advantageous to me to have the credit of Mr. Saunders's posthumous work—to have my name inserted instead of his—and to be considered its author!!! That, if these desirable points could be obtained, I would readily pay Mrs. Saunders one hundred guineas, or whatever sum her friends might consider as an equivalent, together with the profits of the publication,—and that I had *requested him to communicate these propositions to a relation of his own, and the most intimate friend of the family, for the information of Mrs. Saunders.*"

It is justly remarked, that extreme malice often defeats its own purpose. The malignity which had thus perverted my open (and certainly not dishonourable) proposition, could only be exceeded by the

senseless absurdity which fabricated a tale, that could surely not impose upon the most credulous, (though, as asserted by the Secretary of the London Eye Infirmary, “when made, it struck all present with horror.”)

Can it be credited, that, had I been so unprincipled as to *wish*, to rob Mr. Saunders of his well-earned fame, and “to have the credit of his posthumous work,” that I should have had the extreme folly to risk such a disgraceful proposal, which must inevitably blast my own character, to “a friend of Mr. Saunders’s family, to be communicated to Mrs. Saunders, and this some days after I had deputed my highly respectable friend Mr. Milford, to communicate my wish either to the *Committee*, or to Doctor Farre, to become the *editor* of the work? Nay, even after I had learned from Mr. Milford the extreme degree of resentment entertained against me by the officers of the Eye Infirmary,—in whose hands I knew Mr. Saunders’s manuscript was placed, over which, without their concurrence, I also knew Mrs. Saunders possessed no control,—and who, I was well aware, would have been most happy to strip me of my borrowed plumes, had I dared so unjustly to have decked myself with them?—Is it, I say, within the belief of the most prejudiced credulity, that I should venture to present myself before the public, as the *author of Mr. Saunders’s Improvements in Practice*, when the profession were anxiously looking forward for the publication of those improvements, which he had announced to the public, in the Annual Report as already mentioned, and when I had myself made the following Declaration, in a Letter, addressed to the Committee of the West of England Eye Infirmary, dated Nov. 1st, 1809, copies of which,

with the Report, were officially forwarded to the London Eye Infirmary, in conformity to a public Resolution, passed for that purpose, *only four months* before this false and infamous charge was made against me?

To Mr. Saunders I feel more particularly grateful, for having, in the most disinterested and friendly manner, not only allowed me to witness the practice of the London Eye Infirmary, over which he presides, but also for having instructed me in his method of curing cataract, the only one which has been shewn to be applicable, at an early age, to children troubled with that disease. Mr. Saunders has likewise the originality of having first marked the character of inflammation of the iris, and of having pointed out its appropriate method of cure. The discovery of a successful mode of treating those most inveterate and distressing consequences produced by the Egyptian ophthalmia has further been the result of his scientific and unwearied investigations. Upon these highly important subjects, and some others, he has been hitherto prevented by ill health, and numerous professional avocations, from making known to the world the success of his labours. But these, I confidently anticipate, *will shortly be published.*

It were absurd to lengthen a letter already too long, by offering any other refutation of this calumny than the above plain statement of facts. Immediately, upon receiving the Secretary's official Letter I wrote a reply to it, which I requested Mr. J. Milford to deliver to Doctor Farre, and *personally* to acquaint him with the proposals I had deputed him to make.

Mr. Milford, however, seeing clearly in the whole of this attack the hostile spirit which had prevented his applying to Doctor Farre on the former occasion, did not think it worthy his interference, and therefore simply forwarded my Letter without a comment.

Although I fortunately preserved copies of this correspondence, (well knowing the characters of those concerned in the attack upon me,) yet, I confess, until I heard the circumstances already mentioned, I did not conceive, that its authors would have ventured again to

(CIRCULAR.)

*London Infirmary for curing Diseases of the Eye,  
No. 40, Charter-House Square.*

SIR,

Understanding that you are a subscriber to the above institution, I take the liberty of addressing you on a subject, which, however painful to my feelings, the strong plea of necessity obliges me to make public; and when I inform you, that I have made several private applications to the Committee to grant my request, without success, I trust that in this public appeal I shall stand acquitted of any desire to interrupt the unanimity so prevalent among the Governors of this infirmary, and that you will approve of my endeavouring, by every fair and honourable means in my power, to obtain what I cannot but consider as my just right, after the sanction given thereto by the subscribers at large. The annuity of 40*l.* per year was granted to me expressly, *for and during the term of my natural life*, as a small tribute of respect to the memory of my late husband, Mr. Saunders, the founder of this charity, and which has been discontinued since my second marriage with a cousin, by which I have again taken the name of Colkett, and become a mother; and I feel it my duty to state distinctly, that if my present circumstances would enable me to live tolerably comfortable without the aforesaid annuity, I would most willingly have withheld this application: but the reverse is the fact, and necessity obliges me to own it.

The case stands simply thus:—

When it pleased Providence to take away my late husband from this world of trouble at the early age of thirty-seven, and when he had reaped little other advantage from his successful practice than the private satisfaction of doing good, it was well known to the Committee in what situation I was placed by his lamented death, and they kindly undertook to finish and publish, at their own expense, (at the expense of the infirmary,) for my use and benefit, a work on Diseases of the Eye, which Mr. Saunders had nearly completed, and would have published, had his life been spared a little longer. The produce of this publication, I had every reason to suppose, would have realized for me nearly 1000*l.*, which sum would of course have been paid down to me, or laid out in an annuity for me, in neither of which cases could I have lost any part of the money by a second marriage. The Committee afterwards altered their original plan, and thought it better to allow me an annuity of 40*l.* per year from their own funds; this was regularly agreed to, and confirmed by a General Meeting of the Governors, and inserted in the Journals of the Establishment in these words:—

“To the widow of Mr. Saunders, for and during the term of her natural life,” &c. &c.

It will not be necessary for me to state at length my reasons for changing my situation, nor do I at all think it was a question which concerned the Committee; suffice it to say, that I was not conscious of sinning against any law, human or divine, in so doing, and that I married again, as before stated.

This great crime so offended some of the Committee, that, without pretending

not amount to more than 120*l.*, the publisher deducting his price for the whole seven hundred and fifty copies\*.

Mrs. Saunders, after receiving this annuity of 40*l.* for two years, thought proper to marry her own first cousin, to which step the utmost opposition was (as Mrs. Saunders informed me) previously offered by Doctor Farre and Mr. Battley, who authoritatively threatened that the annuity should be taken from her, if she executed her intention. These gentlemen, however justified they might be in advising, had, certainly, no right to *dictate* upon this occasion. There was no injunction in Mr. Saunders's will, to prevent her marrying again; and, as I have been informed, they were not even executors to that will. She acted contrary to their advice, and that of her other friends, and did marry Mr. Colkett. Doctor Farre and Mr. Battley carried their threat into execution: they formed a *Special Committee*, consisting of themselves and four of their friends, and, without taking the sense of the *General Committee*, which had granted Mrs. Saunders the annuity of 40*l.* "for and during her natural life," they took upon themselves to rescind that resolution, which had been officially recorded on the journals of the institution.

This called forth the following printed appeal to the justice of the subscribers at large.

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\* I do not take upon myself any responsibility for the accuracy of the statements I here make, in respect to the money received by Mrs. Saunders for this work, further, than that she personally informed me of them some time since, and that they have very lately been given to me in writing, by her husband, which document I have now before me.

tertained by the Governors for the memory of the late Mr. Saunders: as every Governor will thus have an opportunity of associating his name with that of Mr. Saunders, and of possessing himself of a memorial of that estimable man.

*That the profits of this work (free from every deduction) be appropriated to the sole use and benefit of Mrs. Saunders.*

That a book be opened to receive the names of subscribers, and the number of copies for which they may wish to subscribe.

In consequence of this official invitation, given by a Special Committee of Governors, convened for the purpose of passing the foregoing *liberal* Resolutions, a number of gentlemen, subscribers to the infirmary, who were not professional men, subscribed for copies, some even for half a dozen, believing that, in so doing, they were (in a delicate manner) presenting Mrs. Saunders with the amount of the number of copies taken. By these means, and its own intrinsic worth, nearly six hundred copies of this work (out of seven hundred and fifty, the number printed) were sold, producing upwards of 800*l*. This sum alone would have afforded a comfortable annuity for Mrs. Saunders.

We are, however, informed, by its editor, that—

After active measures were adopted for its publication, at the expense of the institution, the Governors subsequently deemed it more expedient, that it should be published in the usual manner; but, that they carried into effect the principal intention of their Resolutions on the subject, in a manner not less beneficial to the widow.

This was, by granting to her an annuity of 40*l*. “*for and during her natural life,*” from the funds of the institution, together with a gratuity of 50*l*., and the overplus, arising from the sale of the work, after paying the publisher’s expenses. So expensive, however, the publication proved, that this overplus did

bring forward an accusation, which, from its evident improbability, and obvious motives, could reflect no disgrace upon the individual they attempted to injure !!!

Before I conclude, I think it proper, in order to illustrate the disposition of those who professed such extraordinary solicitude for Mr. Saunders, to take some notice of their conduct to the relict of that gentleman. When those *soi-disant* friends of Mr. Saunders sought to traduce and vilify my character, they professed to be actuated by an anxious desire to serve his widow. But mark their conduct towards her :—

A General Committee of the Subscribers of this Institution met a few days after the death of Mr. Saunders, and determined to mark their warm and grateful respect, for the memory of that excellent man, by publishing his unfinished manuscript, with such further additions as their physician was competent to add, at the expense of the institution, &c., for the benefit of his widow, who, it was well known, had been left in very indigent circumstances.

The following Resolutions, published in the Preface of the first edition of Mr. Saunders's posthumous work, will explain the nature of the proceedings of the Committee upon that occasion :—

That the work intended to be entitled "A Treatise on some Practical Points relating to the Diseases of the Eye, and particularly on the Cure of Cataract in Persons born blind," which was in preparation for publication by Mr. Saunders, be published at the expense of this institution, for the benefit of his widow.

That a subscription to the work will be an appropriate mark of the respect en-

to assign any other reason, a Meeting was called, at which only six gentlemen were present \*, and a Resolution passed to rescind the annuity of 40*l.* per year to me, which Resolution will be submitted to the Governors on the 18th instant, for their assent or dissent.

I shall abstain from any personal remarks on the conduct of any of those gentlemen by whose interference the grant was attempted to be rescinded, and content myself with a bare statement of the facts, in the full assurance that I shall not be forsaken on this occasion, and in the earnest hope that you will attend on the day appointed, and join with my other friends in bestowing on me, now that I am actually in a situation to want it, the continuance of this annuity, as originally granted, and which I hope you will not think too much for the eminent services of my late husband, for whose sake alone it was at first given, and with whose opinion with respect to second marriages I was so fully acquainted, that, could he even now speak from the tomb, I am convinced he would not condemn me.

Begging pardon for troubling you so long, and hoping for your kind assistance in this affair, which is so essential to my support,

I remain, Sir,

Your much obliged and devoted Servant,

JANE LOUISA COLKETT,

Widow of the late J. C. Saunders, Founder of the  
London Infirmary, at No. 40, Charter-House  
Square, for curing Diseases of the Eye.

45, Penton-street, Walworth,

15th Feb. 1814.

The result of this appeal in no respect contributed to the relief of the applicant!! The argument attempted to be established by the physician of the infirmary, *who was the chief orator against the "relict" of his "friend and colleague,"* was, that the annuity had been given to *Mrs. Saunders*, and that it was then *understood*, if she married again, it would be taken from her.

Her friends successfully opposed this argument:

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\* The six gentlemen were, as I have been informed by Mr. and Mrs. Colkett, Doctor Farre, his father-in-law, and his father-in-law's partner; Mr. Travers Mr. Battley, and their friend, Mr. Sedgwick.

they contended, her "natural life" could not expire on her changing her name by marriage, and that it was the extreme of folly to mention what was "*understood*," contrary to what was *expressed* on the journals of the establishment, in which this Resolution was officially recorded, as any justification for the act which deprived her of her just right.

Doctor Farre then took other grounds. "*He had been informed by the solicitor of the infirmary, that the Committee had no right to dispose of the funds of the charity, in the manner wished for by the friends of Mrs. Colkett.*"

He thus clearly abandoned those very grounds on which himself and his friends (without appealing to the sense of the General Committee of Governors) had founded their right to withdraw her annuity. Any further discussion of the subject, after this assertion, *could not be agreeable* to the adversaries of Mrs. Saunders, and the previous question being moved, a majority of hands broke up the meeting \*.

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\* It can be no matter of surprise, that there should have been a majority at this meeting in favour of the six Committee Gentlemen. One of them, to my own certain knowledge, went about canvassing the Governors of the infirmary, to attend the Meeting, (which had been convened to consider Mrs. Saunders's appeal,) urging the same arguments which the head of the Committee was afterwards *driven to the necessity of abandoning*.

One of my patients, upon whose veracity I can rely, informed me, that he was so canvassed by a zealous, and, at all times, ready instrument to the wishes of the medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary. This same gentleman was prevailed upon to write a note to Mrs. Colkett (Mrs. Saunders) two years since, immediately after the attacks made upon me from the London Eye Infirmary, and when their authors expected, from my letter to Doctor Farre, (in which I threatened to expose his conduct to Mrs. Saunders,) that I should make a reply to them. Both Mr. and Mrs. Colkett informed me, that it was intimated in this note, if she withheld from me any papers for which I applied, the infirmary might do something for her.

I shall not further enter into the question of the *right* of Mrs. Saunders to marry a second time. It is apparent she possessed that right, and however much it is to be regretted that she should have so exercised it, it is, nevertheless, equally apparent, that her doing so cannot warrant the cruel severity and injustice, which has since been shewn her by "*the friends and colleagues of her late husband*," who affected to feel such a *tender interest* in her welfare, when they commenced their attacks upon me, although she had, at this period, been wholly deserted by them for two years, and, by their influence alone, had been deprived of this annuity, when she stood most in need of it. During this period, they allowed that unfortunate woman, who, whatever were her faults, was still the "relict" of Mr. Saunders, and should have been so considered by them, to be reduced to such extreme necessity, (before she made her situation known to me, from whom, by her written admissions, she was sensible she merited no kindness,) as for the trifling sum of 50*l.* to part with the copy-right, and unsold copies of her deceased husband's work; nay, even to be obliged to put in pawn the *seal* and *miniature* of that very man, respecting whose "posthumous fame," and the respectability of his widow's conduct as it affected his memory, these gentlemen professed to be so anxious.

They, however, thus afforded to the writer of these observations, the supposed enemy of Mrs. Saunders, and of the well-earned reputation of her husband, the extreme gratification, of enabling her to withdraw from pawn, the above seal and miniature

of his deceased friend, and, sacrificing every petty feeling of resentment,—of contributing to the relief of one, for whom he never professed either friendship or regard, and who, he was well aware, had (probably from misrepresentation) joined the hostile combination, which he has just exposed, with respect to the editing of Mr. Saunders's work\*.

As Mrs. Saunders's advocate, I should place her case in the following point of view, I mean upon the basis of *legal right*.

It will be recollected, that the annuity was taken from her at first, without the knowledge or sanction of the General Committee. The great body of subscribers are thus entirely exonerated from the act.

Secondly, the annuity was not a *disinterested* gift of the subscribers of the London Eye Infirmary. It was an equivalent for the sale of her husband's work, *which was her own property*, as his only representative, and over which the managers of that Institution possessed no control; although the General Committee thought proper to order the publication of the manuscript, in such a manner, and attended with such expenses, as their physician should please to incur.

What then would have been the value of this work to Mr. Saunders's widow, if, instead of its having

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\* About this period, I made repeated applications to the Commander-in-Chief, through his Secretary, on behalf of Mrs. Colkett, as being the distressed widow of Mr. Saunders, from whom I first took the idea of that practice which was likely to prove so beneficial in the army. It is my intention to repeat this application whenever a favourable opportunity for success presents itself.

been edited by Doctor Farre, my proposals had been accepted, and *I had become the editor?* for which, as proved by Mr. J. Milford's letter, I offered 100%. and the proceeds, had I been allowed to have inserted the result of my experience and my improvements.

Some estimate may be formed from this fact, that in the year after the appearance of Mr. Saunders's posthumous work, I published a work on Diseases of the Eye, six hundred copies of which have been already disposed of, and the matter of this work, together with other valuable information, it was my intention to have added to Mr. Saunders's manuscript.

According to Mr. and Mrs. Colkett's statements to me, the following is the actual amount of the sums they have received for the work, *as edited by Doctor Farre*:—

Gratuity..... £50

Overplus from the sale of  
nearly 600 copies..... 120

Two years' annuity..... 80

Sale of copy-right and re-  
maining copies ..... 50

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Total ..... £300

Having fully, and, as I think, incontrovertibly answered the Medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary, it may be expected that I should endeavour to account, for the sanction given to their opinions by

the signatures of so many respectable Gentlemen, composing the Committee.

It is not, for a moment, to be imagined that these Gentlemen were influenced by any motive but that which appeared to them, at the time,—perfect justice. The question, however, was *purely medical*, and their decision on it, must have therefore been founded, upon an unlimited confidence in the information afforded by the Medical Officers of their Institution. But, with great deference, I must observe, that a hasty concurrence in information, so derived, could not justify the measure to which it gave birth.

Did these respectable individuals, before they subscribed their names to a publication, expressly and avowedly intended to injure me in my professional, and to stigmatize me in my moral character, pause to weigh the value of that character they were thus about to stigmatize?

Did they examine the truth of the charges they ventured to put forth, with the sanction of their names?—or did they, without such examination, allow themselves to become the instruments of jealous and self-interested Medical Officers?—Did they allow themselves to reflect that the accusations drawn up against me, by competitors in the same line of practice, and submitted to their signature for authentication, might possibly be founded alone in that spirit of intrigue and rancour, which it is so difficult to separate from competition?—

Did they weigh well the injury they were, with easy credulity, about to inflict on an individual who

had never injured them ; but who had endeavoured, as far as his abilities, and the extensive opportunities he possessed, would allow, to render service to humanity, and to our common country, and especially to promote that particular branch of benevolence to which their own attention had been so long and so cordially directed ?—

Did they stop to make any inquiries of Mr. Cline or Mr. Ashley Cooper, who were among the first and most valuable supporters of the London Eye Infirmary ; and who, being also Members of the Ophthalmia Committee, must have been perfectly competent to give them every information with regard to my “pretensions as affecting the rights of the Infirmary, and the merits of the late Mr. Saunders ?”

Was it within their knowledge, that the statements, which their signatures were designed to brand with falsehood, stood not upon my own assertion merely, but upon the solemn attestation of a Medical Board, the honour of which is as unimpeachable, as its official character is exalted ?—And could they forget that his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, for the very facts which they were thus incited to falsify, had been pleased to confer on me a distinction of the most gratifying nature,—which was equally unexpected, and unsought for,—but which I am most proud, and grateful to acknowledge ?

Such inquiries and precautions were no less due to their own character than to mine :—and for want of these,—in direct violation of the spirit of the

English laws, they have *condemned me upon a mere ex-parte statement* : and, while they were entrapped into a belief that they were supporting the cause of charity and truth, they were giving the stamp of their sanction to public misrepresentations, and professional intrigue : —to calumnies, which the real authors of them could never have brought forward into public notoriety, much less into public belief, without such auxiliary support ; —which, but for the authority of that support, must have been contemned and ridiculed as soon as published, and which, indeed, would never have been deemed worthy of a serious answer.

That the gentlemen who have thus seriously injured me have been misled, I am ready to allow ; and that they will regret the part they have thus unwittingly taken, I am as ready to believe.

I doubt not that the Governors at large, will feel themselves called upon to mark their disapprobation of any attempt, to make the proceedings of this excellent institution, an engine for the exercise of private malice, or injustice.

The publication of the “ Official Papers ” by your honourable body, and my undertaking the eradication of the Ophthalmia from the army, brought into active operation that rival jealousy, and selfish alarm, which existed in the breasts of the Medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary ; and which now assumes every form to injure me.

I had the honour of your highly-valued approbation, when I had the good fortune to deserve it ;

and now, when I appeal to your protection, I cannot allow myself to doubt the obtaining it.

I have the honor to be,

My Lords and Gentlemen,

With the warmest sentiments of gratitude

and respect,

Your most obedient humble servant,

**WILLIAM ADAMS.**

26, *Albemarle-street,*

*August, 1817.*

and now, when I appeal to your protection, I cannot  
allow myself to doubt the obtaining of  
I have the honor to be,  
My Lords and Gentlemen,

With the warmest sentiments of gratitude  
and respect,  
I am, Sir, your obedient humble servant,  
WILLIAM ADAMS.

...

## APPENDIX.

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*REPORT of a SPECIAL MEDICAL BOARD, assembled by Desire of the Commander-in-Chief, to take into Consideration the PREVALENCE of the purulent OPTHALMIA in the ARMY.*

Sir Lucas Pepys, Bart., President.  
 Sir Henry Halford, Bart.  
 Doctor Baillie,  
 Doctor now Sir Gilbert Blane, Bart.  
 Doctor Moseley.  
 Everard Home, Esq. now Sir Everard, Bart.  
 Thomas Keate, Esq.  
 Francis Knight, Esq.  
 Henry Cline, Esq.  
 James Ware, Esq.  
 J. W. Phipps, Esq. now Sir Jonathan Wallar, Bart.

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THE Board having deliberately investigated the several circumstances connected in a general manner with the disease, and having adverted more particularly to those points which appear to have occasioned its late prevalence in the Army, begs leave to submit to the Commander-in-Chief the following Remarks upon it; and, for the sake of perspicuity, it is thought advisable to arrange their observations under two general heads—the Means of Prevention, and the Methods of Cure.

Under the first head, that of PREVENTION, the Board is of opinion,

First.—As the purulent Ophthalmia appears to be communicable principally by means of morbid matter applied to the eyes, one of the most obvious modes by which it may be prevented from spreading, is the immediate separation of those who have caught the disorder from the rest of their comrades and associates. As soon, therefore, as the disorder is discovered to exist in a regiment, the Board is of opinion that the Surgeon, or his Assistant, should daily inspect the eyes of all the soldiers; and if there be the smallest appearance of inflammation in any of them, these should be immediately removed from the rest, and be sent to the Hospital, or Dépôt, in order not merely that the disease may be prevented, from being communicated to others, but that proper remedies may be employed, in the most expeditious manner, to arrest its progress in the persons who suffer under it.

Secondly.—Cleanliness, as a means of prevention, is of such high importance, that it cannot be urged too forcibly. In this part of the Report, the Board is of opinion that it cannot object in too strong terms to a practice which has been very commonly pursued in the Army, and in many other confined situations—that of permitting a number of persons to wash their faces, in succession, not only in the same tub or basin, but with the same water. This practice should be peremptorily prohibited in all His Majesty's Regiments, particularly in those where the purulent ophthalmia has prevailed; and, instead of it, the men should be obliged to wash their faces in a running stream, either from a pump or a closed cistern,

under which there is not any receptacle for the waste water; and, instead of wiping the face with a towel common to many, each man should be supplied with one or his own use; and he should be strictly prohibited from lending or borrowing any article of this kind. For greater security in this respect, the Board recommends that those men who suffer under the ophthalmia may be provided with a towel, having a distinguishing mark, such as a coloured border. These marked towels should be kept separate from the rest, and should not be washed by the common washer-woman, but by a person appointed for this special purpose.

Thirdly.—The bedding and clothes of those who have the purulent ophthalmia, are liable to be so much imbued with the discharge that issues from the eyes, as to become a possible cause of communicating the disorder to others. The Board recommends that these be frequently washed and scoured; and as the bolsters and sheets are particularly liable to be thus imbued, the bolsters should be covered with linen cases; and these, as well as the sheets, be frequently and thoroughly washed and cleansed. If this work be properly performed, it does not appear to the Board that these articles need be destroyed. This remark may be applied also to the towels, and to most other things of a similar kind that are employed by the nurses and patients. Sponges, from their porous texture, furnish an exception to the above rule; these it may be better to destroy than to return into store.

Fourthly.—The Board does not presume to offer any opinion on the choice of Depôts for persons who suffer under this disorder, though the subject has been brought before it by a Member of the Army Medical Board. This Board has not sufficient local information to guide its judgment on the subject; and, as it seems intimately connected with general military arrangements, the Board leaves it to the consideration of more competent Military Authorities.

Under the second Head, which relates to the METHODS of CURE, the Board observes, that it is impossible to offer directions that can be applied to all cases of this disorder. The purulent ophthalmia prevails at different times, and in different places, with very different degrees of malignity; and even in the same place, and at the same time, some persons suffer under the most violent symptoms of the disorder, whilst others have it in a comparatively mild form. This variety does not depend on any known difference in the constitution of the patients, some, who were weakened by previous indisposition, having had both the inflammation and the purulence more severely than others who, previous to the attack of this disorder, were in high health and strength. Without directing the practice therefore in each individual case, the Board presents the following observations on a few of the principal remedies that are likely to be required.

First.—On the necessity of taking away blood. When this disorder attacks persons who are strong and plethoric, there cannot be any doubt relative to the propriety of taking away a large quantity of blood; and this in general will be done most speedily, and most effectually, by making a large orifice in a vein in one or both of the arms. When the disorder attacks those who are weakly and debilitated by former illness, if the inflammation be accompanied with a great tumefaction of the conjunctiva, and a profuse purulent discharge, together with much pain both in the head and eyes, the necessity of taking away blood appears, also, to be so strong, that the Board does not think it can be postponed, without imminent danger to the patient's sight; but the quantity to be taken away need not be so great in this as in the former instance; and perhaps the bleeding may be performed most advantageously, either by opening the temporal artery, by cupping on the temples or nape of the neck, or by applying six or more leeches on the temples or forehead.—Sometimes, after taking away blood from the arm, it becomes necessary to repeat the operation more than once, and, occasionally, to apply leeches many times in succession. In some instances, it has also been thought useful to scarify that part of the conjunctiva that lines the inside of the eye-lids; but this operation should be performed with a very sharp lancet; and it seems more advisable in the subsequent stages of the disorder than at the time the inflammation is in the height of its violence.

Secondly.—When the purulent ophthalmia pursues its course in the most malignant manner, it usually terminates in a rupture of the cornea; and this accident too often involves the pupil, and much injures, if it does not destroy, vision. The Board is therefore of opinion, that as soon as the symptoms justify an apprehension of this event, a puncture should be made on the side of the cornea, in

order to discharge the aqueous humour\*. This puncture may be made by a careful person, without any danger, either with a spear-pointed lancet, with the knife used to puncture the cornea in the operation of extracting the cataract, or with an instrument which resembles a common couching-needle, but is somewhat larger, and has a groove passing through it longitudinally, through which the aqueous humour escapes as soon as the point of the instrument has penetrated into the anterior chamber. Whichsoever of these instruments be employed, it should be introduced parallel to the plane of the iris, that it may not wound this membrane; and it should be withdrawn as soon as the aqueous humour has been discharged.—Sometimes, in the purulent ophthalmia, matter is rapidly formed in the aqueous humour behind the cornea; and in such a case the operation of discharging it becomes indispensable; but for this purpose the knife used to divide the cornea in extracting the cataract is more proper than either of the other two that have been mentioned.

Thirdly.—Blisters may be applied with advantage in almost every stage of the disorder; but the Board is of opinion, that, during the violent state of the inflammation, they will be more beneficial between the shoulders than nearer to the eyes. Issues made behind the ears, by means of caustic, may also be useful in the subsequent stages of the disorder.

Fourthly.—During the time that a thick purulent matter issues profusely from the surface of the inflamed and tumefied conjunctiva, it should be washed away once, at least, in every hour. This will be most effectually performed by injecting a medicated liquor between the eye and the eye-lids, by means of a blunt-pointed syringe. The liquor should be propelled with sufficient force to bring away the matter, but without suffering the end of the instrument to touch the eye, and without making any pressure on the globe itself, either with the syringe or the finger. A solution of the Sulphas Cupri, (such as the mixture of one part of the lotion commonly denominated Bates's Camphorated Vitriolic Lotion, and six or eight parts of water,) a solution of the Cuprum Ammoniatum, (formerly called Aqua Sapphirina,) and the Liquor Plumbi Acetati dilutus, may be classed among the best applications in this state of the disorder. It is only necessary to give a caution against using these or any other applications in such a degree of strength as to pain the eye during the active state of the inflammation. In general, it is believed, it will be most useful to apply these lotions cold; but if the coldness be particularly ungrateful to the feelings of the patient, (which is a rare occurrence, except in severely cold weather,) they may be applied warm.—Sometimes, and especially when there is considerable pain in the eye, advantage has been derived from holding the eye, between the times of applying the lotion, over the vapour of hot water,—or from fomenting the eye by means of a sponge, or fine flannel, either with a hot decoction of poppy-heads, or with a mixture of one part of vinegar, and ten or twelve of hot water.

Fifthly.—The Board is of opinion, that the bowels should be kept in a laxative state during the violence of the inflammation, and saline purgatives appear to them preferable to those that are more stimulating.

Sixthly.—In the early stage of the purulent ophthalmia, the use of alterative medicines seems wholly precluded. In its subsequent progress, various kinds of alteratives, and also of tonics, may become useful, according to the peculiar constitutions of the patients; but the selection of these must be left to the discretion of the medical men who prescribe them.

Seventhly.—A total abstinence from animal food and fermented liquors, and a very low diet in every respect, are absolutely required, so long as the violence of the inflammation continues. A more nutritious diet may be afterwards allowed; but the change should be made with great caution, and the indulgence be immediately prohibited if it appear to occasion any increase of the inflammation.

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\* This is the mode of practice to which I adverted as being "*especially different*," from that recommended in my essay perused by the Ophthalmic Committee, in 1814, and reported upon by Sir Henry Hallford, as being that "*which is generally adopted by the profession.*"

**Eighthly.**—It does not appear that injury has been derived from the access of cold air, in cases of the purulent ophthalmia, when patients have not been exposed to partial currents of it. But manifest harm has been done by keeping them in hot rooms, and confining them long in their beds.

**Ninthly.**—As instances have occurred of the ophthalmia having been produced by the application of acrid substances to the eyes, it may be proper to remark, that neither the tumefaction of the tunica conjunctiva, nor the quantity of matter secreted by this membrane, are so considerable, when the disorder is produced in this way, as they are when it is occasioned by the contact of purulent matter.

By desire of the Board,

(Signed)

L. PEPYS, President.

S. REED, Secretary.

London, 5th Feb. 1810.

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### GENERAL ORDERS.

*Horse Guards, 10th April, 1810.*

IT is the Commander-in-Chief's Command, that the accompanying "*Report of a special Medical Board, which has been assembled to take into Consideration the Prevalence of the purulent Ophthalmia in the Army,*" shall be circulated for the information of the Commanding Officers of Regiments, and for the guidance of all Medical Officers belonging to the Army.

By Command of

The Right Honourable the Commander-in-Chief,

HARRY CALVERT,

A. G.

## SUPPLEMENT.

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HAVING, as I trust, amply refuted the calumnies, which my conduct with regard to the Egyptian ophthalmia has excited against me, I am next called upon to expose the animadversions of the editor of the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, with respect to your publication, entitled "Official Papers," &c.

This Report was placed in the order of criticism in that Journal, under the following head:—

"Official Papers, relating to the Operations performed by Order of the Directors of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, on several of the Pensioners belonging thereto, for the purpose of ascertaining the general Efficiency of the new Modes of Treatment practised by Mr. Adams, for the Cure of the various Species of Cataract, and the Egyptian Ophthalmia. London, July 1814, pages 21."

Thus, the words conspicuously printed on the title-page, "*published by Order of the Directors,*" were entirely omitted. In the Table of Contents, the Report was simply entitled, "Mr. Adams on Cataract," &c. The editor's criticism was as follows:—

We cannot praise Mr., (now Sir William) Adams. We can conceive no reason, not unworthy a member of a liberal profession, for keeping secret new modes of treatment, practices, or operations, after their efficiency is ascertained, and when, by disclosing them, he could confer a benefit on the human race. If we were not well acquainted with the History of *Nostrums*, we might be inclined to think the evidence here laid before us conclusive: but we shall fear some mistake or deception, until the practices shall be confirmed by their success in other hands than the Knight's; for it is the operation, and not the operator, we look to; and until, by the disclosure of the *secrets*, we shall be enabled to judge of their merits scientifically.

—*Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Review*, July 1814.

In reply to this very unwarrantable and offensive statement, the medical officers of Greenwich Hospital, sent the following letter, for insertion in the next number of that Journal :—

GENTLEMEN,

A statement having appeared in the last number of your valuable journal, charging Sir W. Adams with keeping secret his improved operations on the eye, we consider it but an act of justice to the individual in question to state, that his uniformly open and liberal conduct towards us, since his appointment as operator for diseases of the eye to the Royal Hospital, has been such as to merit our warmest esteem and respect. That, so far from his manifesting any disposition to operate in private, we have been, and still continue, by his permission, in the constant habit of inviting our medical friends to witness *all operations* performed upon the pensioners placed under his care; and also, that we have generally observed, on these occasions, *numbers of the profession in private practice* present, invited by Sir William Adams himself, to whom he has, in our presence, *explained the nature of the different operations they had seen him perform, with the same minuteness and candour, which, in every instance, we have ourselves experienced from him.* Not doubting you will give the earliest publicity to the above communication,

We are, &c.

R. ROBERTSON, Physician.

B. M'LAUGHLIN, Surgeon.

M. S. KENT, Apothecary\*.

This letter contains a complete refutation of the editor's charge. It shews that I had *not* "*kept secret*" "*any of my new modes of treatment, practice, or operations,*" consequently, that I had no "*secret*" to disclose; and this letter, however unwilling to do so, this editor could neither refuse to insert in his Journal, nor decline to notice. It accordingly appeared in the number for January 1815, page 92, accompanied with the following observations :—

We sincerely rejoice that we were mistaken in the opinion we had formed of Sir William Adams: but, while we do justice to his character, we must vindicate our

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\* See the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, for July, 1814.

own. With Sir William Adams we have no personal acquaintance ; we formed our opinion of him entirely *from his writings*. We have again perused " the official papers " with the greatest attention, and we are convinced that every impartial person, judging from them, would form *nearly* the same opinion as we did. *The whole publication still seems to us solely calculated to serve the private interests of Sir William Adams* ; for it conveys no other information to the public, than that he is the most scientific and successful of all oculists, and has invented peculiar and appropriate instruments, and modes of operation for some of the worst diseases of the eye. We find, indeed, that he personally explained to the Board the nature and effect of his several operations ; and that he communicated to the medical officers much valuable information and instruction relative to diseases of the eyes. But, in this very widely circulated pamphlet, there is not only no communication to the profession at large of the nature of any of his discoveries ; but from *several passages* we very naturally concluded, that no early communication of the kind was intended. We appeal confidently to the two following paragraphs ; one taken from the report of the medical officers, the other from his own letter to the Board :—

" In addition to the gratifying contents of the second Report, we think it our duty to state, for the information of the Board, that Sir William Adams has discovered a mode of curing the Egyptian ophthalmia, which has been successfully practised upon several of the Pensioners, some of whom had been blind for three or four years, and given up as incurable by the most eminent oculists then in London. The communication that this destructive, and hitherto intractable, disease admits of cure, we conceive will be gladly received by the Board, and the promulgation by Sir William Adams of this important discovery, be considered as a great *national desideratum*.

" Where the cataract is too hard, and solid, to admit of this immediate division, I do not attempt, as was my former practice, to effect its absorption by a frequent repetition of the operation ; but I at once extract it. This, however, is accomplished by a process *totally different* from that I have felt it a duty to deprecate ; a process which I must claim to be novel, and which happily attains the highly important desiderata which had been hitherto considered *unattainable*, while it obviates the many causes of failure which rendered the usual mode of extraction so generally unsuccessful. From the principle upon which it is founded, and the favourable results of its termination during the last two years that I have extensively practised it, I feel myself warranted in asserting that it possesses the utmost degree of excellence which it is *possible* for extraction to arrive at, and that its general success will prove nearly as great as the operation for the removal of the soft cataract. *To deter other persons from claiming it as their invention, or anticipating me in its communication to the public (as was the case with my instruments and operation for the cure of the soft cataract, and my successful revival of an obsolete operation for artificial pupil), I have requested Mr. McLaughlin to record on the hospital books the different stages of this operation, as he has seen me perform it on several of the pensioners.*"

The Editor, in his observations, fails equally in doing justice to my character, and in vindicating his own. That he was, as he professes, *sincerely rejoiced* at refuting his own calumnies against me, will meet with that degree of credit the assertion merits, upon a perusal of the following facts.

He begins with an intentional concealment, by keeping a very important communication from his readers, of which he himself, from a perusal of these official papers, which he is pleased to term "my writings," must *have been fully aware*: namely,—that they were published in consequence of a public resolution of your Honourable Board,—and that the only part of them *written by me* was my letter addressed to the *Board*, and *not to the public*, which letter, as will be seen, by the two following extracts from the Report itself, it was your pleasure should be published with the other papers.—

It appearing, by the Reports of the medical officers of the hospital, that the operations performed on the blind pensioners by Sir William Adams, had been attended with great success, the Directors were desirous of viewing the men, and for that purpose convened a Special Meeting, at which the pensioners, as well those who had been under the care of former oculists, as the patients of Sir William Adams, were examined and individually interrogated; and as the effects of the operations performed by the latter, as stated in the Reports of the physician, surgeon, and apothecary, were found to be accurately detailed, the Directors have considered it to be their duty to give publicity to the official Reports and proceedings, on a subject so interesting to humanity.

At a Meeting of the Directors of Greenwich Hospital, at that place, on Monday,  
the 10th of January, 1814;

PRESENT:

CAPTAIN BROWELL, Lieutenant-Governor;

Lord Auckland.

Mr. Yenn.

Rev. Mr. Cooke.

Dr. Robertson.

It being evidently desirable that publicity should be given to the success which

has attended Sir William Adams's operations in restoring to sight so many pensioners of the hospital—

ORDERED,

That the Letter and the Report above mentioned, from the Medical Officers of the Hospital, together with Sir William Adams's Letter of this date, the Surgeon's two Letters of the 26th of May and 28th of August last, and the proceedings of the Board relative to this subject, be forthwith printed and published.

The *candour* and the *impartiality* which have guided the editor's conduct with regard to what *he knew were really* "my writings," and which have influenced his public remarks upon my professional character and conduct, will be properly appreciated by the public, when it is known, that my work on *Diseases of the Eye, containing a detail of every operation for artificial pupil and cataract (with only one exception) performed upon the pensioners at Greenwich Hospital, and published nearly two years before the "official papers," was at my request put into his hands by Mr. George Bell, one of the surgeons of the Royal Infirmary at Edinburgh, as that gentleman informed me. For reasons best known to himself, this editor has never thought proper to notice that work; it was open to his critical analysis, and, had it merited his censure, he had a fair and manly opportunity of indulging his hostility to me. But he has even omitted to name this work in his recent analysis of the several medical and surgical publications which have appeared during the last ten years, although the other authors, on cataract and different diseases of the eyes, have been particularly enumerated.*

This editor states that "he formed his opinions of me entirely from my writings," and had "no personal acquaintance with me," but could he have been ignorant of my professional conduct while in Edinburgh, in the autumn of the year 1811?

I then, at the request of the surgeons of the Royal Infirmary of that city, performed two of the principal operations for cataract adverted to in the Official Papers, upon patients in the infirmary, before all the surgeons of that institution, and its numerous class of students, and afterwards gave a written description of these operations, (twelve months before they were published in my work) to Mr. Russell, the clinical lecturer in surgery, which description was read by him to his numerous class of students. Besides, I not only lent him my instruments to exhibit on that occasion, but permitted the instrument-maker, at the request of the surgeons of the infirmary, to take patterns, for the use of the profession, of all those which I employed upon the Greenwich pensioners, and afterwards examined his execution of my patterns with the utmost attention.

This conduct alone would be sufficient to shew that I was not inclined to favour "secrets or nostrums;" and as the patients operated upon were subsequently attended by the surgeons of the infirmary, who had witnessed the operations, they were perfectly competent to decide, whether I had strictly pursued the written description I had given Mr. Russell, and, also, whether I had given a fair and candid description of them in my work on Diseases of the Eye. The editor could scarcely have been ignorant of these facts; it was his duty to have been informed of them; indeed they *were noticed in the preface of that very work*, which, as already mentioned, had been put into his hands at my request\*.

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\* "The different operations which I have recommended, are, I believe, very generally known, wherever I have been called upon to operate. While in Dublin, my operations were witnessed by the most respectable physicians and

It is important for me also to add, that *more than two months* before the publication of the criticism in question, I had, in reply to similar charges of secrecy, published the following letter in another Medical Journal, which the Edinburgh critic can scarcely pretend not to have seen.

*To the Editors of the London Medical Repository.*

GENTLEMEN,

IN the notice taken, in the last Number of your respectable Journal, of the Official Report of the result of the new operations for cataract, published by order of the Directors of Greenwich Hospital, you justly express disapprobation of the concealment of any professional knowledge, which, if generally communicated, might prove useful. No one more perfectly coincides in this opinion than myself; which sentiment has induced me *constantly* to invite the respectable resident practitioners, wherever I have been called upon to perform any of the operations for diseases of the eye, which I have invented, or improved, to witness them, and to observe their results. While I assert that the concealment of any valuable practice from *selfish* or *mercenary* motives cannot be too severely reprobated, it must at the same time be obvious, that every man is justified in taking the necessary precautions to secure to himself the undisputed right, to any improvement which he may have suggested.

In the present instance, I was induced to request the surgeon of Greenwich Hospital to record on the hospital books the steps of my new mode of extracting the cataract of old persons, (all the other operations performed upon the pensioners being already before the public,) *not with the intention of retaining it as a secret*, but to "deter" other persons, of whose conduct on former occasions I have been obliged to complain, from again anticipating me, or claiming it as their own invention, should they learn its nature from any one of the *many professional gentlemen* (besides the medical officers of Greenwich Hospital) who have seen me perform that operation. I must, however, wait for a further experience of its superiority, before I present it to the public; as I conceive any professional man,

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"surgeons in that city; whose disinterested and friendly conduct I shall ever  
 "remember with sentiments of esteem and obligation;—and, during a short stay  
 "in Edinburgh, on my return to England, the surgeons of the Royal Infirmary,  
 "actuated by the same sentiments of liberality, requested that I would exhibit  
 "some of my operations for cataract on patients in that institution, which I had  
 "the honour of doing before them, and the numerous class of students belong-  
 "ing to the University."—See page 11 of the *Preface to my work on Diseases of the Eye*.

whose opinions may be valued, would do wrong to publish, and to sanction any new practice, until by its extensive and general efficacy he conscientiously feels justified in recommending its universal adoption; or until he has ascertained whether any one of its stages is capable of further improvement.

It may possibly be superfluous for me to add, that the letter, in which the operation in question is mentioned, was addressed to the Directors of Greenwich Hospital, all of whom, with the exception of Dr. Robertson, the physician of the institution, are unacquainted with professional subjects; so that, even had I thought proper to publish the detail, it would have been quite out of place in that letter.

I have the honour to remain, Gentlemen,

Your very humble servant,

WILLIAM ADAMS,

26, Albemarle-street,

April 20, 1814.

Ophthalmic Surgeon to Greenwich Hospital.

To this letter were annexed the following remarks:—

\*\*\* If we ever misrepresent opinions from the imperfections of language, for we never can intentionally do so, or by accident give an improper colouring to the facts of any man, our pages are freely open to his justification.

Nulli negabimus, nulli differimus justitiam.

In the above instance there seems to be some feeling in the mind of Sir William Adams, that an idea of interested concealment may possibly be promulgated by our observations on the Greenwich Hospital Report (page 385, No. 4, of *The Repository*). In those observations we explained, as far as we then could, the concealment and its motives; and we “took it for granted” that Sir William did mean, at a fit opportunity, to lay the whole of his process before the public. We have now the authority of his own letter for his ultimate intention, with his reasons for the present delay; and we present it to our readers with satisfaction, because, it having been shewn on clear evidence that his process has been completely successful, this letter is an assurance that finally its benefits will be generally extended, by its full disclosure. Having so often observed the ill will and acrimonious contentions that have arisen among the claimants of professional discoveries, we are not dissatisfied with the method Sir William has adopted to secure his invention to himself, as well as to prevent the hostility that might arise on a doubtful case.—*Editors*,

So far in answer to the editor’s “opinion of me, and of my writings.”

The next assertion, that the “*whole publication* (the “*Official Papers*) *seems solely calculated to serve the pri-*

"*vate interests of Sir William Adams,*" is, to say the least, equally incorrect with his former statements, and implies something like, if not an absolute charge of disingenuousness or duplicity, against the Board of Directors.

The Directors publicly declare, that "they considered it to be *their duty* to give publicity to the "Official Reports and Proceedings, *on a subject so interesting to humanity.*"—And from what causes did this determination arise? From the Report (No. 1) of the Medical Officers of the Hospital, that, in *twenty-four* operations, of extraction of the cataract, most of them performed by the oculists of the Royal Eye Infirmary in London, there was *only one* which had succeeded; while it will be seen by referring to Report 2, that on *thirty operations*, which I had performed, *only one* failed; although more than one-half of these cases had been either rejected as incurable, or operated upon without success, by the professional gentlemen who preceded me.

The Directors, fully aware of the acknowledged professional eminence of the former operators, justly concluded that the fault was in the operation they practised; and accordingly stated, in the commencement of their introductory observations,—

That, in the autumn of 1812, being informed that great improvements had been recently made by Mr. Adams, late Oculist to the West of England Infirmary at Exeter, in the mode of operating on the different kinds of cataract; and as the practice of *extraction* heretofore performed upon the pensioners had not been attended with the desired success, he was requested to examine the blind pensioners, and to select such of them for treatment as admitted of being cured.

The Pensioners being desirous to be placed under the care of Sir William Adams, the Medical Officers of the Hospital were directed to attend the operations, to afford every assistance, and to report to the Directors, the progress and result.

The Directors had been acquainted, that, with one exception, I had already published a description of all the operations for cataract, as copies of my work were laid before the Board ;—which work, with all the editor's pretensions to humanity, and his utter abhorrence of secrets, he had done every thing in his power to keep from the knowledge of the profession.

The object of the Directors, therefore, was to inform the public, from well-authenticated facts, of the comparative success of these new and improved operations, with the usual mode of extraction. In ordering the publication of the Official Papers, they could have had no particular view to my private interests, as boldly asserted by the editor alluded to. I was a stranger to them, *collectively* and *individually*, until called upon to perform these operations ; but, acting on the principle which they themselves assign, “ they considered it to “ be their duty to give publicity to the official reports “ and proceedings, on a subject so interesting to hu- “ manity.” They might, perhaps, have conceived this measure the more necessary, it being actually published, that in more than *six hundred* operations performed for cataract, by extraction, *scarcely forty had failed, in that very institution*, where the greater part of the *unsuccessful operations had been previously performed upon the pensioners !!*

But not only in the instance of the pensioners of Greenwich Hospital, but in the tables which detail the results of the operation of extraction in France—the opinions of its warmest eulogists on the continent—as well as those of the most eminent surgeons in this country, which appear in the work published with this letter,—the evidence of fact, and the judgment of authority, will be found in favour of my new and

improved operations ; and thus will be *disproved* the assertion, that the publication of the Official Papers was *solely calculated* to serve my private interest ;—the interests of society being so materially concerned in the question.

The editor is also incorrect in his assertion, that from *several passages* in the Official Papers (though there were only two which, by any application, he could strain to his own construction, and which two passages he has quoted,) he was justified in concluding that no early publication of the nature of my more recent discoveries was intended to be made.

With respect to my mode of treating the effects of the Egyptian ophthalmia, mentioned by the medical officers in their letter to the Board,—and the only operation for cataract specified by me in my letter to them, which had not been for two years before the public, I shall here stop only to state the fact,—that, for *five months* previous to the publication of the Greenwich Hospital Report, I had devoted the whole of my leisure to the preparation of the present publication on Cataract ; and I had not only given up all the time I could spare from professional practice, to the subject of the Egyptian ophthalmia, for some months previous to the editor's observations, but had, as has been already shewn in this letter, made my practice generally known throughout the profession. That practice had, indeed, been communicated by me to a considerable number of army and other surgeons, by whom it had been generally adopted ; as well as by the Medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary, where diseases of the eye are publicly taught.

It cannot, I presume, after this statement of facts, be

denied, that this editor of the most widely extended publication of its kind, stands convicted of what I cannot allow myself to characterize, both in his original attack upon me, and in his attempt to justify that attack. But in addition I have to submit to the reader's judgment some very peculiar circumstances that subsequently occurred.

Mr. Battley's printed circular letter, having been forwarded, as I had ascertained, to every medical periodical publication in the metropolis, I naturally *concluded*, that he would not fail in transmitting it to that journal, which had already manifested such a feeling of hostility towards me. I took the liberty, therefore, of writing to a noble Earl residing near Edinburgh, and to a gentleman of the highest respectability, resident in that city, stating my suspicions; in these letters I enclosed a copy of a letter I had addressed to the President of the Ophthalmia Committee, which was read by all its Members, and which I was assured, had confuted the inaccuracies and misrepresentations, contained in Mr. Battley's publication. This letter I entreated my correspondents to communicate to the editor of the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, in order to convince him of the calumnies to which I had been exposed, and to give him an opportunity, gratifying to every honest mind, of sacrificing prejudice and falsehood, to justice and to truth.

The following copy of the letter, which I received from my friend residing in Edinburgh, will best explain the nature and result of this negotiation:—

*Edinburgh, March 15, 1815.*

DEAR SIR,

I received your dispatch, and lost no time in communicating its contents to Doctor Duncan, jun., from whom I learnt that he had received Mr. Battley's

letter, and, if I chose, would insert your's to Sir H. Halford along with it. This being the case, I thought it right to consult Lord W., as there was no time to correspond with you; and, with his concurrence, I have sent the following letter to Balford, to Doctor Duncan:—

“DEAR SIR,

“I returned to Mr. Stark this morning Mr. Battley's letter, concerning Sir William Adams; which, I confess, I think it would have been better to leave out of your journal. As you have, however, expressed your determination to publish it, I also left with Mr. Stark, as you said you would give it room, a copy of Sir William's letter to Sir Henry Halford, as the best means of turning the edge of Mr. Battley's criticisms. In doing so, however, I beg you will understand that I have no authority whatever from Sir William Adams. I do it, after having consulted another friend of his here, as the only means we have to prevent any ill effect from the publication of the printed letter.

“I am, dear Sir, &c. &c.

“14th March.”

“T. A.”

I trust all this will meet your approbation. In conversing with Doctor Duncan, I find he still considers that you are possessed of *some secret*; else, says he, “how happens it, that *Sir William is always successful, whilst others practising the methods he has described, so often fail?*”

You know I am quite ignorant on the subject, and you must therefore forgive me if I cannot be so useful to you as I could wish.

Believe me, dear Sir,

Your's, very truly,

T. A.

After the receipt of this letter, written without the remotest idea that I should have occasion to employ it in any manner, I naturally expected to see Mr. Battley's letter, and my own also, in the next number of the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*. But, when the editor offered to insert the latter, it may be presumed that he did not suppose my friends would agree to his so doing without my concurrence, which he well knew there was not time to obtain, and that he was not at all prepared for their demand that Mr. Battley's

misrepresentations should not be published without their antidote.

It would indeed have been of no small importance, that my letter to Sir Henry Halford should have appeared at that time in this journal, as it not only refuted the misrepresentations of the Secretary to the London Eye Infirmary, but exposed those also of the Medical Officers of that institution, which had then been published. In a state of perplexity, between inclination and duty, the editor finally determined on withholding both Mr. Battley's letter, and my refutation of it, from that view of the profession which his journal would have afforded. His avowed excuse was the want of room, though a page or two would have been sufficient for the purpose, and many of his journals have been known to exceed by fifteen or twenty pages that, in which he would not find a place for those troublesome papers. In his apology to the public for not publishing them, he, however, expressed a *patriotic* wish, that the public money, which he seemed to insinuate, that I was receiving, or about to receive, from Government, for the discovery in question, might not be misapplied; whereas it will be seen by the very letter which he declined to insert, and which I now publish, that I had neither obtained, nor solicited any remuneration from the Government.

(COPY.)

*To Sir Henry Halford, President of the Ophthalmic Committee.*

*December 18, 1814.*

DEAR SIR,

A printed letter having been sent to me this day, signed by the Secretary of the London Eye Infirmary, and which is ostensibly published "for the assistance of the Ophthalmic Board in their duty as Censors," I think it necessary, without delay, to contradict, in the *most decisive manner*, that part which states "that I have made an application to His Royal Highness the Duke of York for a grant

“ on account of a new mode of treatment successfully employed by me in the cure of the ophthalmia.”—*No such application ever has been made by me, nor have I ever entertained the most distant idea of so doing.*

Equally false is the charge of my endeavouring to claim the merit of any discovery of Mr. Saunders. The preface to my Essay on the Ophthalmia, which the Committee perused last year, as well as my recent letters to Mr. Abernethy and yourself, prove that I have acknowledged all the information I obtained from him in the treatment of that disease, and have also pointed out in what respects my practice differs from his. As I stated in that Essay, and these letters, Mr. Saunders first pointed out to me the granulations of the lids, and I by no means do, or ever did, claim the merit of *that* discovery; but I certainly do, and ever shall, that of an *improvement* upon his practice,—as well as a mode of removing opacities of the cornea attending this form of the disease, which I never saw him attempt, and which I have, as I stated, reasons for believing his successor does not, even now, frequently succeed in accomplishing; yet without removing these opacities (when once they are formed) the removal of the granulations cannot in the least benefit the sight of the patient. That my wish is only to claim an *improvement* in the treatment of the *third* stage, and that I am more solicitous about the *utility* of the practice than the establishment of its *originality*, is shewn by my having called upon you a week since, to request, in drawing up the Report, to wave my claims to “ a new treatment ” of the third stage, in order to save the Committee the trouble of investigating them, and merely to state their opinion, whether, the method pursued by me, or that by Mr. Saunders, “ was better suited to the practice of the army.” You did not think it right for me to interfere; and therefore the matter dropped.

It may be proper here to explain, that, when I laid pretensions to a “ new mode of treating the ophthalmia,” I alluded principally to my discovery of the efficacy of “ continued sickness and vomiting ” in curing the disease a few hours after its commencement. That the Commander-in-Chief was of the same opinion, is proved by his declining to see the deputation from the St. Pancras Committee, because, as the Adjutant-General wrote me, his Royal Highness expected that the Ophthalmic Committee would report, upon my practice, in *all the stages* of the ophthalmia, and therefore thought it would be improper for him to form an opinion from any other source than that Report.

With respect to the accusations contained in the printed letter of Mr. Battley, of any dishonourable intention to anticipate Mr. Saunders, I pledge myself to rebut the charge in the most satisfactory manner, by the evidence of Mr. Russell, Treasurer of the West of England Eye Infirmary; who, five years since, when the ophthalmia raged so extensively throughout the army, and when the Government was so anxious to discover a cure, invited, without my knowledge, the General of the district (the late General Thewles) to come to the Exeter Eye Infirmary for the purpose of seeing some ophthalmia invalid soldiers whom I had cured; and who strongly urged the propriety of my immediately acceding to General Thewles's wish and proposal, of officially transmitting to the

late Commander-in-Chief (Sir David Dundas) an account of what he had seen, but which I peremptorily refused until I had obtained Mr. Saunders's assent.

For reasons which I do not pretend to explain, Mr. Saunders angrily refused his consent, as well as to a subsequent proposal, that, through my interest with General Thewles, the facts should be transmitted to Government, giving him the whole merit of the original discovery, and withholding my own claims to the important improvements I had made in his practice.

Had I been the character which Mr. Battley represents, it must be evident I might have complied with General Thewles's earnest wish of reporting my success to Government without Mr. Saunders's knowledge or consent; but to which proposal I would not for a moment listen, although it was strongly enforced by my friend, Mr. Russell, after Mr. S—— had refused to afford the information himself.

I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir,

Your humble servant,

WILLIAM ADAMS.

P. S.—Soon after the correspondence upon this subject, Mr. Saunders died; when, released by his death from those feelings of delicacy which had hitherto restrained me, I assented to the proposal of my patron, the Bishop of Exeter, to introduce me to the Adjutant-General, who did me the honour to present me to the late Commander-in-Chief; to whom, shortly afterwards, I addressed a letter upon the subject, of selecting a certain number of ophthalmic patients to be sent down to Exeter, for the purpose of undergoing my improved treatment for the *third stage* of the disease. In this letter, dated March 1st, 1810, a copy of which is, of course, in the Adjutant-General's Office, are the following passages:—"Within these few months I have perfectly cured from fifteen to twenty invalid ophthalmic soldiers by pursuing a mode of operation *first suggested by my late friend and preceptor, Mr. Saunders, and since improved by myself*, without meeting with a single instance of failure." Again, "In thus coming forward, I must beg to state, that the only motives by which I am actuated are, in the first place, a desire of communicating highly useful information; and, secondly, *an earnest wish to benefit the widow of my much-esteemed friend.*"

Any further refutation of the charges brought forward by Mr. Battley against my character and conduct must be deemed superfluous.

His present conduct evidently proceeds from the spirit which he betrayed, when he brought before the Committee of the London Eye Infirmary, an individual, to declare, that I had expressed a wish to publish Mr. Saunders's discoveries as my own. This too took place after Mr. Saunders's death, who had himself published, in an Annual Report of the London Eye Infirmary, the instruction he had afforded me, and after I had myself not only acknowledged my obligations to him, but had even specified his discoveries in the first Annual Report of the Exeter Eye Infirmary, copies of which were officially sent to the London Eye Infirmary.

May I not now put the following question, without a doubt as to the answer,—whether it be not evident, from the whole of the Editor's conduct, that he has intentionally kept back from the notice of the public, every thing which could contribute to my professional character\*, or to the refutation of charges both malicious and unjust, while he eagerly seized upon the only opportunity which offered, to do me, as he seemed to expect, a most essential injury? The facts, however, which I have related, prove that this attempt was made by the sacrifice of that honest feeling and sense of justice, which ought to regulate the conduct of every man, and to form an invariable standard for the conductors of a public journal, the reputation of which must necessarily be reduced in the opinion of the public, when its pages are prostituted to motives of party feeling, or of individual interest.

My work of 1812, *containing an explanation* of my various operations, is in this Editor's hands, and defies his criticism.

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\* The character of that work may be seen by the following quotation, taken from the Report read before the Société Philomatique, which was subsequently translated and inserted in the Philosophical Magazine.

“ The work of which we have now given an account to the Society, evinces in its author a conspicuous talent for observation, great experience, and much of that ingenious spirit which is ever fertile in resources, and so useful in the practical sciences. It is, in short, one of the best works ever published on the Diseases of the Eye. We are of opinion, therefore, that the Society owes its thanks to the author for his book; and that it will be an honour to the Society to enrol Sir William Adams among the number of its foreign correspondents\*.

(Signed)

“ MAGENDIE, D.M.S.

“ N. DE BLAINVILLE.”

\* “ This Report was read, and highly approved by the Society, at a General Meeting held on the 28th of May, 1814, when Sir William Adams was unanimously elected one of its corresponding members.”

In the beginning of 1815, on receiving a copy of the Greenwich Official Papers, which I did *not* write, and which he *knew* I did not, he first ventures to affirm—that he has no other acquaintance with me than what *these writings* of mine (for so he wishes to make them appear to the world) have produced : and secondly, he insinuates that the operations I practise remain *undiscovered* ; and that no early communication of them is intended.

While only two months afterwards, (March 1815,) he incidentally admits, not only that I *have* described my methods to the public, but that others have actually *adopted and practised them* ; observing upon the occasion, with extraordinary simplicity, that “ I must still possess some secret by which I am always successful, while others *practising the methods I have described*, (and described too in the book which he had then for two years withheld from the public,) so often fail \*!!!”

The dilemma is here complete, and let the Editor extricate himself from it, if he can †.

\* If, in reality, I have been more successful than others, this might be readily accounted for, by the greater degree of experience I must possess in these operations.

Can it be a matter for surprise, that the practice of any general surgeon, in new operations published only for two years, should not be as uniformly successful, as that of the individual by whom they had been invented and matured, and who had subsequently possessed the very extensive share of operative practice I have enjoyed?—I have stated in my work, published with this letter, that I calculate to have performed, on an average, six or eight operations each week, during the two years in which I was at the head of the West of England Eye Infirmary, and I have repeatedly operated upon ten or twelve patients the same day.

† It would appear from a statement made by Doctor Farre, in the Preface to the second edition of Mr. Saunders's posthumous work, that Mr. Saunders's memory has not escaped the hostility of this Editor; who freely admitted into his journal the unmerited remarks made to the prejudice of Mr. Saunders's character, by the biographer of Mr. Gibson, while he withheld from the view of the public Doctor Farre's subsequent vindication of that character.

The passage, on which the charge of concealment is attempted to be fastened on me, occurs in my letter to the Directors of Greenwich Hospital.

In this passage I observed that I had taken steps to procure my new operation of extraction to be recorded in the hospital books, in consequence of having been anticipated in the communication to the public of my operation for artificial pupil,—and in-consequence also of my instruments, as well as operation for the soft cataract, having been altogether pirated from me. These piracies were openly committed, without the slightest notice being taken of them by the Edinburgh, or any of the other Medical and Surgical Journals (one only excepted),—although it is the duty of those journals to protect the rights and properties of medical authors. I therefore submit to the candour of my readers, whether I did not owe it to my professional reputation, to take this precaution, in order to secure to myself the credit of the invention, of my new operation of extraction.

Mr. Ware, in the second edition of his works, published in 1805, strongly deprecated Cheselden's operation for artificial pupil. A few weeks, however, previous to my settling in London in the year 1811, he edited a new and third edition of the second volume of his works, even before it had become scarce in the shops, in which he changes his opinion of this operation, with a mere unsupported declaration, that he had repeatedly and successfully performed Cheselden's operation, but without the slightest allusion to his former unsuccessful practice, or to the cause of the improvement in his later experience. The character of this statement will appear from the exhibition of the *passages*, in the two editions alluded to.

Mr. WARE's *Second Edition*,  
published in 1805.

The translator sees no good reason to dispute the veracity of Mr. Cheselden, in his description of the present case. It was certainly possible for him to succeed in the way he has here mentioned. At the same time, the translator is of opinion, that the operation proposed by the Baron, which he thinks would naturally occur to every person who prefers the operation of extraction to that of depression, is much more likely to be attended with success.

Mr. WARE's *Third Edition*,  
published in 1811.

The translator sees no good reason to dispute the veracity of Mr. Cheselden, in his description of the present case. It was certainly possible for him to succeed in the way he has here mentioned; and the translator particularly recommends the operation in those cases where the pupil has become closed after the extraction of the cataract.

In these the opaque crystalline having been removed, it is most probable that the imperforate iris forms the only impediment to the passage of light to the retina; and the iris being stretched by the closure of the pupil, its division in the way recommended by Cheselden gives its fibres an opportunity to retract, which they generally do to a considerable extent.

The translator has repeatedly performed the operation with perfect success; scarcely any inflammation having been excited by it, and vision becoming at once as perfect as after the most successful removal of the cataract.

In order to give greater publicity to his recently-adopted practice, he at the same time published a small pamphlet, extracted from his greater work, repeating his recommendation of Cheselden's operation. In the edition of this volume, as well as in the pamphlet, he also anticipated me in the description of my operation for the soft cataract in children, and gives an account of his success in the operation, which, however, he acknowledges to have seen me perform, but still continues to express his opinion in favour of extraction, in preference, when the disease attacks adults and aged persons. About this period, he nevertheless performed it on adults, two of whom afterwards became my patients, and in a short time he adopted it also in persons far advanced in life.

In my work upon Diseases of the Eye, I have noticed this uncandid treatment, and given the particulars of the case of soft cataract to which Mr. Ware alludes, adding, that he had expressed himself much pleased with the operation, and

“acknowledged at the time, to the other professional gentlemen I had also  
“invited to witness it, and, after I left London, to the patient and his friends,  
“whom he frequently visited, to observe the after-treatment and the progress of  
“the cure, that he had never practised, or previously seen, a similar operation.”

Again, in regard to his anticipation of my operation for artificial pupil, I observe that—

“In March 1810, during one of my visits to London from Exeter, where I then resided, I met Mr. Ware in consultation on the case of Lady W——, (the initial of whose name I am authorized to insert,) who laboured under closed pupil, complicated with cataract and amaurosis. I then communicated to him the result of my first operations for artificial pupil, and explained to him the manner in which they were performed. I also stated the circumstances which, I conceived, had induced the generality of surgeons to relinquish the operation of Cheselden; and pointed out the manner in which they might be obviated. In the course of the same conversation, I expressed a confident expectation, that, if I could obtain the instruments I wished, the disease of closed pupil would no longer continue so intractable as it had hitherto proved. Mr. Ware appeared so incredulous on the subject, that he almost doubted the facts I had stated; and by no means acquiesced in the general inferences I had deduced from them. In the following June, at his own house, I again renewed the subject of artificial pupil, but found his opinion unchanged. At this time I put into his hand a copy of the first Annual Report of the West of England Eye Infirmary, published November 1, 1809, (more than twelve months before the appearance of Mr. Gibson's work on Artificial Pupil, &c.,) in which is recorded a vote of thanks given to me by the respectable Committee of that Institution, ‘for having practised an operation with perfect success, in the case of closed pupil, complicated with cataract; very few cases of which, as this meeting is informed, are recorded in the annals of British surgery’ ”\*.

Two facts are therefore obvious:—first, that if Mr. Ware had ever successfully performed the operation for artificial pupil before March, 1810, he would not have doubted my assertions, that I had succeeded in re-

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\* See my work on Diseases of the Eye, p. 31.

storing Cheselden's operation ; which he did in the hearing of Lady W——, and her husband. Secondly, that if he had succeeded, even so late as June, 1810, when I dined with him, he would not still have continued to doubt my assertions ; but, on the contrary, would have pointed out, that I was not in justice entitled to the honour of receiving a public vote of thanks for my success.

But what places the matter beyond all doubt, is that Mr. Ware expressed his regret at having thus anticipated me, to a gentleman who was anxious to procure our joint opinions on the case of his wife ; when I declined meeting Mr. Ware, for the reasons assigned in the following letter :—

(COPY.)

SIR,

I HAVE had the honour to receive your note, requesting me to meet you and Doctor Sims in consultation to-morrow, at Mr. ———'s, King's-road. It occasions me much regret to be under the necessity of declining to acquiesce in your proposal, as, from the consequences which resulted from my unreserved communications to you when we met at Lady W——'s four years since, it is quite natural that I cannot again consult with you, with the same feelings as I then did. It being absolutely necessary for the benefit of the patient that there should be no restraint, or want of confidence in those to whom the medical treatment devolves, a conscientious regard to my duties, as a professional man, induces me to adopt my present determination. I feel the more regret at being compelled to act in this manner, as it is the first time in my life, that I have refused to meet a respectable member of the profession.

The injury of which I have been obliged to complain in my publication on Diseases of the Eye, (and for which you have offered no reparation either public or private,) has been the more sensibly felt by me from your general character for liberality ; for that character removed all hesitation in inviting you to witness one of my newly-invented operations for cataract, as well as in communicating to you my revival and improvement of Cheselden's obsolete operation for artificial pupil, thus evincing a degree of candour that merited from you a very different conduct to that, which you well know has been pronounced, *wholly unbecoming* the high rank and eminence you hold in your profession.

I have the honour to be, &c. &c.

March 1st, 1814.

WILLIAM ADAMS.

To JAMES WARE, Esq.

To this letter I received no reply ; but, having enclosed a copy of it to the husband of the patient, as my reason for refusing to meet Mr. Ware, he afterwards informed me, in the course of my attendance on his wife, with Doctor Sims, that Mr. Ware continued to express his regret that he should have anticipated me in the publication in question. He did not, however, as in my opinion he should have done, express that regret either to myself or to the public, and therefore we had no further communication.

It is with sincere regret that I feel myself compelled to bring before the public, transactions which it has been my wish should sleep with the dead, because such reference may be painful to Mr. Ware's family, particularly to his son, for whom I entertain great personal respect ; but I am called upon, by every consideration, to explain the reasons that caused me to take those precautions, which have formed an ostensible ground-work, for so many injurious attacks upon my personal character and professional conduct.

With respect to the very extraordinary piracy attempted of my operation for the soft cataract, as well as of the instruments which I employ in its execution, I feel restrained by no scruples of delicacy, and shall proceed at once to expose it.

In March, 1811, I was called from Bath to operate in a case of congenital cataract, upon the child of a gentleman in Portman-square. Two professional gentlemen were present : one, that liberal and highly eminent practitioner, Sir Richard Croft, the other the medical attendant of the family, whom I had never

before seen, but who attended the operation, probably at the request of the family. On the morning of the operation he made very particular inquiries as to the exact steps of the operation, the form of my needle, and the name of the maker, &c. &c. To all his questions I replied, in the hearing of Sir Richard Croft, without the least reserve. I also put into his hands a copy of the Second Annual Report of the West of England Eye Infirmary, in which the operation itself, with the needle, which he saw me employ for the relief of the little sufferer, were very particularly described.

In the middle of August, 1812, I published my work on Diseases of the Eye, in which I described this operation and needle, and also my concave speculum; of both instruments I gave engravings.

The following October, a paper appeared in the Medical and Physical Journal, and in Dr. Shearman's Journal, written by Mr. Stevenson, containing some general observations upon cataract; in November a second paper appeared, as if in continuation of the former, in which Mr. Stevenson published as inventions of his own, the identical operation and needle, which had already been described by me, (with an engraved representation of the latter,) in my work published the preceding month of August. Mr. Stevenson also gave an engraving of a concave speculum, in principle the same as that I had published, and the exact representation of one which I had constructed in February, 1812.

In February, 1813, a pamphlet, entitled A Practical Treatise on Cataract, was also published by Mr. Stevenson, containing a repetition of his descriptions of my operation, needle, and speculum, with

engravings of the two latter. Of these descriptions, as well as of the engravings, I give copies from the respective publications, in order that a proper judgment may be formed of my statements.

ADAMS.

*Published August, 1812.*

"The speculum of Pellier is, I believe, very generally used in this operation; but the patient often complains more of the pain caused by it than by the needle.—This appeared to me to arise from the segment of two spherical bodies, nearly of the same magnitude, being in contact, by which all pressure is confined to a single point. Sufficient control over the action of the muscles of the eyeball, can therefore only be obtained by using a degree of compression, which gives great pain during the operation, and sometimes produces a contusion of the coats of the eye, which I have seen excite and keep up considerable inflammation for some time. It is therefore evident that Pellier's speculum is not well adapted for the intended purpose."

"—— but the patient often complains more of the pain caused by it (i. e. Pellier's speculum) than by the needle."

"The principle which ought to be kept in view, in the construction of an instrument for fixing the eye, is to divide the necessary pressure on as large a surface as possible, instead of confining it to a single point. To effect this, the bearing part of the speculum should be concave, and accurately adjusted to the convexity of the eye-ball."

"I have since had another made of solid metal, which possesses the advantage of a smooth and regular surface. The bearing part is so formed as to make an equal pressure on somewhat less than one-third of the circular outline of the eye-ball; but, as this varies in different patients, the operator should always be provided with two or three instruments

STEVENSON.

*Published November, 1812.*

"Pellier's elevator, although in many respects an objectionable instrument, has for some years been generally preferred. Being made of thin silver wire, and the bearing part, which is opposed to the superior spherical surface of the eye, being nearly convex, in order to effect the requisite steadiness of the globe, so much pressure must be applied to one point, as cannot fail to occasion uneasiness, and endanger contusion, with subsequent inflammation to the tunics of the eye."

"—— instead of Pellier's elevator; the application of which, will often produce more pain than all the subsequent steps of the operation."

"With a view to obviate these inconveniences, I caused a speculum to be constructed somewhat like Pellier's, but with wire *double* the usual diameter, and arched in such a manner as to embrace, by its corresponding concavity, a large segment of the upper portion of the eye-ball; the whole surface of contact being flattened, and guarded with silk, neatly sewed round the bow."

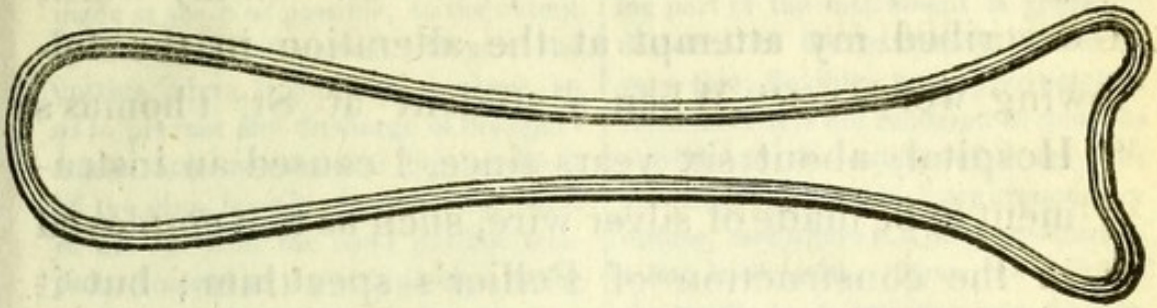
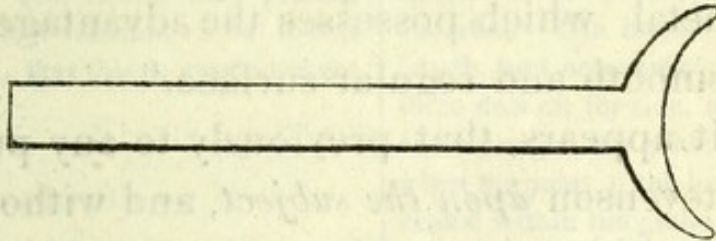
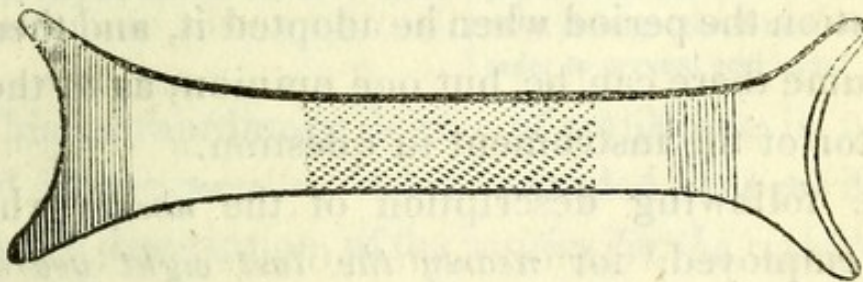
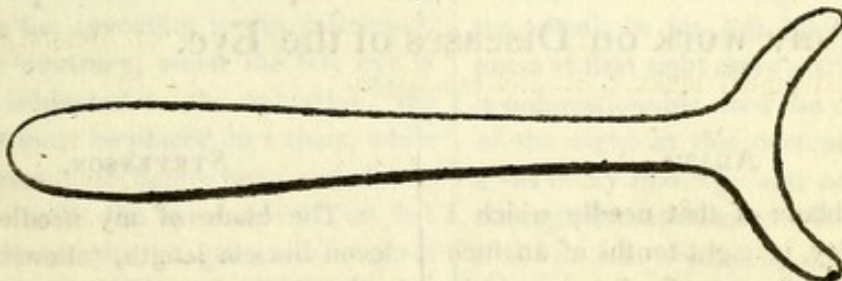
"After a series of improvements in its form and construction, the speculum which I have now the honour to submit to the consideration of the profession will, I flatter myself, be found by others, as it has proved in my own practice, well adapted to afford, in the most easy and effectual manner, all the assistance that can be desired from instruments of this

On examining the annexed engravings, to which I request the reader's particular attention, it will be seen, that the principle of my concave speculum, and that published by Mr. Stevenson as his own invention, is precisely the same. The *convex* end of Fig. 1 is Pellier's speculum, which was in general use in this country. In 1806, I employed Mr. Smith, surgeons' instrument-maker, St. Saviour's Church-yard, Southwark, to alter the convex form at one end into a concave form, in order to adapt it to the convexity of the eye. This he attempted in the manner represented in the *concave* end. Finding, however, that its points of pressure acted unequally upon the eye-ball, and not having a convenient opportunity to procure another better formed, I continued to employ Pellier's convex instrument until my settlement in London in 1811. In February, 1812, I directed Mr. Eichhorn, surgeon's instrument-maker, of St. Martin's Lane, to construct for me the concave speculum, Fig. 2, filed out of a piece of lead\*; and, shortly afterwards, one in silver, which is represented by Fig. 3. This is an improvement on Fig. 2, and is the same *published in my work of August, 1812.*

Fig. 4 is that Mr. Stevenson published in November, 1812, which is *precisely the same as Fig. 2*, and which, as already stated, is constructed upon the *principle* of Fig. 3, that, I had published the preceding August.

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\* Both these instruments are for inspection in the hands of Messrs. Savigny, surgeons' instrument-makers, St. James's street.

*Fig. 1.**Fig. 2.**Fig. 3.**Fig. 4.*

Mr. Stevenson does *not mention in his Treatise when he first adopted* this concave speculum. In my work, I described my attempt at the alteration in the following words:—"When a student at St. Thomas's Hospital, about six years since, I caused an instrument to be made of silver wire, such as that employed in the construction of Pellier's speculum; but it failed to answer the purpose, as the curvature was irregular, and did not correspond with the convexity of the eye;" and again—"Disappointed in my expectations, I have since had another, made of solid metal, which possesses the advantage of a perfectly smooth and regular surface."

Thus it appears, that previously to any publication by Mr. Stevenson *upon the subject*, and without having the remotest idea that my invention would be claimed by another,—I had actually stated the very year when I first attempted to carry into effect the proposed alteration. Mr. Stevenson has not thought it prudent to mention the period when he adopted it, and therefore I presume there can be but one opinion, as to the real inventor of the instrument in question.

The following description of the *needle* which I have employed, for *nearly the last eight years*, for operating on the soft cataract, will shew the *very extraordinary* similitude between it, and that described and published as his own invention, by Mr. Stevenson in November, two months subsequent to the publication of my work on Diseases of the Eye.

## ADAMS.

The blade of that needle which I now employ is eight-tenths of an inch long, the third part of a line in width,

## STEVENSON.

"The blade of my needle is only eleven lines in length, (allowing twelve to the inch,) one-third of which, from

nearly flat, having a slight degree of convexity through its whole extent. It is spear-pointed, with both the edges made as sharp as possible, to the extent of four-tenths of an inch. Beyond the cutting edges it gradually thickens, so as to prevent any discharge of the aqueous or vitreous humours: the handle is of the usual length. It enters the coats of the eye with the most perfect freedom. Instead of the cutting-edge being confined to the mere point, it extends so far back, as to be nearly, if not entirely, equal to the diameter of the cataract. Its convexity also affords a sufficient degree of strength to prevent it from bending during its passage through the coats of the eye, should they present any considerable resistance: but it cuts so very sharp, that this in general is not to be feared.

"Some caution in its use, however, is requisite on the part of the operator; otherwise, as it is an instrument of great power, and traverses the eye with so much facility, it may wound the iris, or its point may be carried too far towards the nose."

This extraordinary degree of similitude is not confined to the *needle*; it has extended even to Mr. Stevenson's description, of the *position for the right performance of the operation*, as well as of the operation itself.

#### ADAMS.

"The patient, when the right eye is to be operated on, must be placed on his back. The operator sits behind him, holding the speculum in his left hand. On the contrary, when the left eye is to be subjected to the operation, the patient must be placed on a chair, while the operator sits before him; and, fixing the eye with the speculum in his left hand, he has also the great advantage of operating with his right. This variation

the shoulder downwards, is round, and diminishes gradually from half to one third of a line in diameter. The remaining part of the instrument is gradually flattened to the extremity, which is very thin, flexible, and spear-pointed. Both the edges are rendered as sharp as possible to the extent of three lines above the angles, which are ground very obtuse, and where it is only one-third of a line in breadth. From the point of the needle to its insertion into the handle, it gradually increases in size; by which mechanism, not only is its introduction into the eye effected with less resistance, but likewise the escape of any portion of the aqueous or vitreous humour is at the same time altogether obviated. The handle is of the usual length, and octangular; and there are three dots on the side, answering to the cutting edges, as a guide to the operator, when the point of the instrument is concealed within the globe of the eye."

"On this account it requires, I must admit, a very steady hand, and a considerable share of boldness and decision, together with a practical acquaintance with the resistance that is usually opposed to the introduction of an instrument through the tunics of the eye, in order to prevent accidents."

#### STEVENSON.

"When the right eye is the subject of the operation, it has been customary to propose that the surgeon should take the needle in his left hand. This appears at first sight more artificial; but it is unquestionable that the constant use of the right in this part of the world, gives every man a greater command and strength in that member. Besides which, if the patient is placed, as I would recommend, on his back, the surgeon,

of position appears to me highly advantageous, as few, if any, can possess the power of using both hands with equal dexterity."

"The pupil being in a dilated state from the application of the extract, or a strong solution of belladonna, an hour previous to the operation, and having secured the eye by a gentle pressure with the concave speculum, introduced under the upper eye-lid, I enter the two-edged needle through the sclerotic coat, about a line behind the iris, with the flat surface parallel to that membrane. I then carry it cautiously through the posterior chamber, without in the slightest degree interfering with the cataract or its capsule, till the point reaches the temporal margin of the pupil; when I direct it to the anterior chamber, and carry it on to the nasal margin of the pupil, in the line of the transverse diameter of the crystalline lens. I then turn the edge backwards, and, with one stroke of the instrument, cut both capsule and cataract in halves. By repeated cuts in different directions, I afterwards divide the opaque lens and its capsule in many pieces, and at the same time take particular care to detach as much of the latter as possible from its ciliary connexion. As soon as this is accomplished, I turn the instrument in the same direction as when it entered the eye, and, with its flat surface, bring forward as many of the fragments as is in my power into the anterior chamber, by which means I frequently leave the upper part of the pupil perfectly free of opacity."

sitting behind him, will find the fingers of his left hand exactly in the situation to take charge of the superior palpebra, and to steady the organ without the use of any speculum, the assistant at the same time depressing the lower lid."

"The patient having been properly seated, the pupil fully dilated by the external application of the belladonna, and the eye steadied by means of the fingers when practicable, or otherwise by a well-adapted speculum, the instrument is to be introduced in the usual manner through the sclerotica, at a distance not exceeding one line behind its junction with the cornea, with its flat side parallel to the plane of the iris. The needle is then to be carried to the front of the cataract, its point being projected across the anterior chamber to the nasal margin of the pupil. The cutting edge is next to be turned backwards; when, by moving the needle so as to describe the segment of a circle, the capsule with the enclosed lens must be divided into equal portions. Proceeding cautiously in a similar manner, by repeated transverse and perpendicular incisions, the whole crystalline, and its enveloping membrane, will be reduced into small flocculi. This object having been accomplished, the handle of the instrument is to be carefully rotated between the finger and thumb\*; by which manœuvre the capsule is more effectually detached from its connexions with the zona ciliaris at every point of its circumference, and the cohesion of the component parts of the lens more certainly destroyed. The whole, or as many of the fragments of the capsule and crystalline as the circumstances of the case will admit, without danger of wounding the iris or ciliary processes, are then to be pushed forward into the anterior chamber, by means of the flat surface of the needle; which must then be withdrawn in the same manner as it was passed into the globe of the eye."

\* See Pott's Directions for operating on a soft Cataract.

From the foregoing comparisons, it is evident that the *speculum*, the *needle*, and the *operation*, described by me in August, 1812, were published in the Medical and Physical Journal, by Mr. Stevenson, as his inventions, in November, 1812, and repeated in his Treatise on Cataract, in February, 1813. Mr. Stevenson, in his paper, *dated* in August, 1812, but *certainly not sent* to the periodical publication in which it appeared until the following October\*, asserts that he had ordered the needle to be constructed *eighteen months before*, which, by a curious coincidence, carries his assumption back to the *exact period*, when the apothecary who attended my operation in Portman-square, was so particularly minute in his inquiries respecting the steps of my operation, as well as the name and address

\* The following letter was written by the late Mr. Royston, Editor of the Medical and Physical Journal, to a respectable surgeon, who, although at the time an utter stranger to me, was so forcibly struck at the flagrancy of the piracy, that he undertook to write, for the express purpose of exposing it, but he suppressed his publication, after it was printed, at my particular request:—

“ SIR,

London, May 25, 1813.

“ Having no particular reason for remembering the precise day on which a communication may be sent me, as Editor of the Medical and Physical Journal, I cannot answer to a day, the time Mr. Stevenson's papers came to hand; I remember that event, however, with sufficient distinctness to say, that the first part of Mr. Stevenson's paper on cataract, printed in the Journal for October, 1812, (No. 164,) was received in, or about the middle of August; and *the second part*, printed in the Journal for November, was received *before the middle of October*, but not so soon as the month of September; otherwise, as a matter of course, that receipt would have been stated in the notices to correspondents, in the usual place in the October Journal.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your obedient Servant,

“ WILLIAM ROYSTON.”

To Mr. PRICE, Surgeon, Middle-street, Gosport.

of my instrument-maker, &c. &c.\*. I have since ascertained that this apothecary is a most zealous professional friend of Mr. Stevenson; and, in his anxiety to serve him, that he has forgotten towards me, in a variety of instances, the professional etiquette which usually regulates the conduct of respectable practitioners. The fact, however, of my having given him the printed Report of the West of England Eye Infirmary, dated October 3, 1810, (in which is the following passage,) very sufficiently proves my priority to Mr. Stevenson, in the adoption of the needle, and the operation alluded to.

“ In consequence of having also made an alteration in the instrument for curing  
 “ cataract, as well as in the method of conducting the operation taught me by  
 “ my late most respected friend Mr. Saunders, I am enabled to succeed in  
 “ a much shorter space of time than I was in the earlier periods of my practice;  
 “ the necessity of repeating so frequently the operation to effect a permanent  
 “ cure, which then existed, being by these means almost entirely superseded. The  
 “ result of my experience in cases of this nature leads me to assert, that no ope-  
 “ ration of importance in surgery is more uniformly successful than that which  
 “ *several of my professional friends have seen me practise in the cure of cataract for*  
 “ *these last eighteen months*; having, even within the last twelve months, operated  
 “ on more than forty cases successively, in my public and private practice, with-  
 “ out experiencing one unfavourable result.—This mode is equally applicable to  
 “ *persons born blind* of cataract, of whom I have cured *thirty-seven* with but one  
 “ instance of failure, and that entirely attributable to the patient's indiscretion.  
 “ Even now, there would be every probability of a favourable issue, if he would  
 “ submit to an operation for closed pupil.”

The first case which suggested to me the idea of using this instrument, and performing this operation, occurred in November, 1808, and was, in fact, the identical case

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\* It is worthy of remark, that my nephew, Mr. Hockin, perfectly recollects carrying one of my needles about that time also to Messrs. Savigny as a pattern. At this period, I remember to have had occasion, more than once, to complain to them of their exposing to sale, without my permission, different instruments which I had constructed in a peculiar manner for my own use.

which gave rise to the revival of Cheselden's obsolete operation for artificial pupil. During my subsequent residence in Exeter, I uniformly employed the needle in numerous operations for cataract. In Bath, the operation was witnessed by Dr. Chichester, Dr. Murray, &c. &c.; in Bristol, by Dr. Pope, Mr. Estling, and by various other professional gentlemen, several months previous to my operation on the child in Portman-square, which took place at the exact period when Mr. Stevenson states he ordered the construction of his needle.

The evidence which I have adduced of anticipations and piracies will, I presume, be considered as conclusive; and I can have no doubt that it will be the opinion of every candid and reflecting reader, that I was fully justified in having my new operation of extraction recorded in the books of Greenwich Hospital; not to prevent my practice from being known, as prejudice has insinuated, but to defend it from piracy, and to secure to myself, whatever merit belonged to my inventions and improvements. The precaution, however, was not decisive. I have shewn by facts and dates, in the work on Cataract which accompanies this letter, that the peculiar principle even of *this operation* was published by Mr. Travers, without any acknowledgment of its origin, two years after I had adopted it, and a year and a half after it had been recorded on the hospital books, and very extensively witnessed by the profession.

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The editor of the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal has gone no further than to accuse me of that illiberal disposition to conceal my practice which I have in this letter, I think, incontrovertibly refuted, preserving a total silence on every other point that

concerns my professional reputation. Persuaded, as he must have been, from the perusal of my work on Diseases of the Eye, and of my Letter addressed to the president of the Ophthalmia Committee, that I had made no assumption or claim, either in respect to my improvements in the treatment of cataract, or to my practice for the cure of ophthalmia, to the injury of Mr. Saunders, or which were not proved to be correct by the evidence of facts and experiments, he prudently passed over, with the silence it deserved, the Special Report of the Medical Officers of the London Eye Infirmary. The example, however, of unmerited censure, was followed by other reviewers, and the first of those followers whose conduct I shall notice, is the London Medical Repository, which had already felt it necessary to make me an apology relative to the Greenwich Official Papers \*.

I was informed by one of the editors of this Journal, that a colleague of his had determined to review the Special Report; and a most respectable physician, whose friendship I have the honour to enjoy, and who was acquainted with this editor, shewed him my letter to Sir Henry Hallford, as president of the Ophthalmic Committee †. But although, from its perusal, he became acquainted with the inaccuracies and misrepresentations of the Report, he disregarded its influence, seconded by the authority of this gentleman, as well as of his colleague, both of whom were fully persuaded of my honourable conduct to Mr. Saunders. He accordingly reviewed the Special Report, as if he believed it to be true, inserting the four conclusions of the

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\* See my Letter and the Editor's Apology, page 119.

† See page 126.

medical officers of the London Eye Infirmary, with regard to the ophthalmia, which conclusions I have already disposed of. The editor, however, declared *his opinion*, that those gentlemen “ had succeeded in convicting “ me of an unjust assumption of Mr. Saunders’s rights,” in the different stages of this disease, and he concludes his comments in the following words :—that,

“ In the same manner, (as in regard to ophthalmia,) Sir William was indebted to his instructor, for the operation which he has adopted in the congenital cataract of infants, and the soft cataract of adults; his modification of the operation, *whether it be regarded as an improvement or otherwise*, being no alteration of the principle, which alone constitutes the discovery.”

It has been shewn, that I have, upon every occasion, acknowledged my debt to Mr. Saunders, for a practical knowledge of the operation for cataract upon children and adults ; the contrary cannot indeed be asserted with even a shadow of foundation.

That the principle of Mr. Saunders’s operation and of mine, in this species of cataract, is the same, there can be no doubt, as both are effected by the solvent powers of the humours of the eye. This power was, however, well known, long before Mr. Saunders was born : his merit, therefore, consisted in the *application of this principle* ; not in its “ *discovery*,” as asserted by the editor. And, surely, if by a peculiar modification of the operation, with a peculiar instrument, I can, “ without inflicting any violence on the organ,” as has been proved by hundreds of instances, effect, in one or two operations, and in the short space of five or six weeks, what sometimes required ten or twelve operations during as many months, when the operation practised and recommended at the London Eye Infirmary was pursued, it cannot be denied that I have materially promoted the interests of humanity and of science ;—and,

although I may have *affected the interests of the living*, that I have not, as asserted by this editor, “disturbed the ashes of the honoured dead, set aside the just claims, or crushed the fair fame of that much-lamented and eminently-deserving member of the profession,” Mr. Saunders, whose fame, so many have invidiously, and unnecessarily, put in competition to mine.

The assertion contained in the sixth conclusion of the Special Report I deny in the most direct and positive manner. Mr. Saunders could never have either “fully tried or deliberately rejected my operation,” even supposing he had become acquainted with it. Experience, indeed, contradicts the bold assertion. If he *had* tried it, no doubt the operation would have proved as successful in his hands as in mine.

The injustice of the editor of the London Medical Repository towards me did not stop here. Not content with these accusations, he, like his countryman and compeer, the editor of the Edinburgh Journal, also keeps back every thing which could tend to exonerate me from dishonourable imputations, and has published the whole of Mr. Saunders’s letter, written in 1809, which I have already been compelled to style “unwarrantable and unjustifiable,” and which was written in a moment of irritation, as Mr. Saunders’s subsequent conduct and conversation fully proved, without either inserting any part of my letter, which called forth that of Mr. Saunders, my reply to it, or that written to Mr. Saunders, by Mr. Johnson. Had he inserted these letters, which were published with that of Mr. Saunders, in the pamphlet entitled “The Special Report,” he well knew that he would have lost the power to injure me.

How far, by the conduct I have just exposed, this

editor has fulfilled the promises held out to the profession in the first number of the London Medical Repository, will be seen by referring to page 68 of that number ;—and how far that conduct is in unison with the declaration contained in the “ Address to the Faculty,” inserted in the same number, will appear from the perusal of the following quotation:—

“ *That as their (the Editors) first object will be to impart truth, their opinion will, they trust, be expressed with amenity, and always directed, they hope, by candour and liberal feeling; and, when they must point out error or disclose deception, their comment will go no further than may be requisite to establish their position.*”

The editor has, however, expressed

“ *That he will be as ready to do me justice, as he has been to join in my condemnation, whenever sufficient evidence is adduced, to counterbalance that before the public in the Special Report.*”

That evidence, I presume, he will not venture to deny has been adduced in this letter; and I therefore demand from him, the justice which is equally due to truth, to my character, and to the profession who have patronized his Journal.

I shall not presume to enumerate all the qualifications which the conductors of reviews ought to possess; but certainly it is in the highest degree important to the welfare of society, and to the reputation of authors, that those who conduct medical reviews, should be candid, honourable men, and that their journals should be free from *party feeling*; for, as the majority of practitioners have not leisure to peruse all new publications, one of their chief sources of information is derived from medical journals. Now, if the editors of such publications, from favouritism to one man, or set of men, do all in their power to misrepresent the conduct of another, who happens to be a competitor; sometimes keeping back his writings from the

eye of their readers, lest a review of them should extend his fame and reputation; and at other times bringing forward other writings as his, which in reality, as well as in their own knowledge, are not so, with the intention of calumniating him, by proclaiming that he had made public his success, while he withheld from the knowledge of the profession the means by which he had obtained that success; however such reviewers may gain confidence in their outset, and whatever may be the term of that confidence, they must sink into utter disgrace in the end. Mankind will not for ever be deceived; the still, small voice of truth, will at length prevail; the ephemeral pages will lose the power of poisoning the public mind; and the work and the workmen will be alike degraded in the estimation of every man of integrity and respectability.

It would extend this letter too far to observe upon the whole of the attacks made upon me in different Reviews and periodical publications. Many of them are indeed unworthy of notice; but, from the superior character of the *Quarterly Review*, I cannot pass over in silence, the manner in which my work on Diseases of the Eye has been there reviewed, and associated with the Greenwich Report, as if both were written and published by me.

The two publications are actually reviewed in the same article; and (as in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*) it is throughout carefully concealed from the knowledge of the reader, that the Official Papers were published by order of the Directors of Greenwich Hospital, in which publication I was in no degree concerned, but inasmuch as it was the pleasure of the Board to publish, with the other official papers, my

letter addressed to them, and written for their perusal.

Had the editor of the Quarterly Review been acquainted with medical subjects, I feel convinced that he would never have permitted such a misrepresentation to appear in his journal. The accusation preferred by this reviewer, of a desire to conceal my practice, appears the more extraordinary, from its being made at the very time that my work on Diseases of the Eye was reviewed, which, as already stated, contains a description of the whole of the operations for cataract performed on the pensioners, with only one exception. The following passage, however, at the conclusion of the Review, plainly marks the hostile spirit with which it was written :—

“ It is true that the mode in which the result of Mr. Adams’s successful experiments at Greenwich is made public, without a complete description of the nature of the operations performed, and with formal attestations of the truth of the facts adduced, appears to us to be somewhat beneath the dignity of regular practice : but the report of that result being so highly favourable, and so perfectly well authenticated, we have thought it our duty to overcome the reluctance which this approach to the garb of empiricism had created, and to contribute our part towards rendering more public, the merits of an operator so skilful and ingenious as Mr. Adams, now Sir William, has proved himself to be.”

I shall conclude with contradicting a report, which has been very industriously circulated,—namely, that, in my communications with the Board, I had not treated my predecessor with the delicacy and respect to which he was entitled, from his skill and his professional eminence. The inaccuracy of this report will be seen, by the following extract from my letter to the Directors, published in the Official Papers :—

“ 26, Albemarle-street, Jan. 9, 1814.

“ MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

“ THE favourable termination of the trial which you directed to be made, in order to ascertain the comparative success of my new modes of operating for

the cure of cataract, with that of the operation of extraction, as it is generally performed, will, I hope, be thought to justify my addressing you on the circumstances of it.

“ Although fully aware of the dangers attending the operation of *extraction*, as usually performed; and apprized, as I was, that the pensioners could no longer be prevailed upon to submit to that mode of operating, from its ill success for the last fifteen or twenty years; I did not conceive, till I perused the Reports of the surgeon of the hospital, that the proportion of failures was so great.

“ From the statements which have been made of the success of the practice of extraction, the public have been taught to believe that it possessed all the excellence, of which any operation for the cure of cataract was susceptible. It became, therefore, highly necessary that such an experiment as the present should be instituted; and that, under the immediate superintendence of *impartial* and *disinterested* persons, whose testimony could not be doubted.

“ It is, then, with no common satisfaction, that I now request your attention to the comparative results of the different operations, (the *new* and *old*,) as specified in the Official Reports of the physician, surgeon, and apothecary, to your institution; which, with the personal examination you intend this day to make of the two sets of patients, must necessarily establish, beyond all doubt, the decided superiority of my modes of operating, over that which had been previously practised on the pensioners.

“ And here I beg leave to repeat the observation I made at my first interview with your Honourable Board,—that it is the *operation*, and not the *operator*, which I deprecate. Were he to adopt my operations, or were I to follow his, the results of the two modes of practice would probably be nearly the same as they are now found to be; nor shall I hesitate to add my firm belief, that superior manual dexterity is not to be found in this kingdom, than is possessed by the operator whose efforts have proved so unavailing, in the many instances submitted to your consideration. It is, I conceive, the want of a personal experience of the superior efficacy of my practice, which prevents his adopting it with the same promptitude as another oculist of long-established celebrity, has done, since he saw me operate; who, before that period, was distinguished by his practice, as well as writings, as one of the warmest advocates of the operation of extraction.”

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FINIS.