

An essay on saving persons from drowning at the breaking of the ice ; delivered ... on the 19th of January 1814 / [George William Manby].

Contributors

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AN ESSAY

On saving persons from drowning at the breaking of the Ice; delivered by Captain GEORGE WILLIAM MANBY, Esq. Honorary Member of the Royal Humane Society, before their Committee, assembled at the London Coffee-House, on the 19th of January 1814.

THE loss of human life is always a subject of distress and lamentation; but, when this calamity suddenly happens in the midst of health, and in the pursuit of active recreation, how deeply is our sorrow aggravated! Such is the unavailing affliction of the survivors of those unfortunate individuals who have perished by the breaking of the ice when they were enjoying the robust and healthy exercise of skating. These fatal events take place every winter; most of which might have been prevented had there been prompt arrangements previously made, and ready means at hand, for affording instant relief in cases of such extreme peril.

Among the many awful instances of this nature which occurred last winter, there was one in Scotland that demanded my most serious consideration. *Seventeen* persons were at one and the same moment precipitated into Eternity!

The history of this truly melancholy event was related to me while I was in that country, employed in carrying into effect the humane intentions of Parliament for averting or lessening the perils of the storm.

Royal Humane Soc
Annual Report 1814

The impression made on my mind by this shocking event, led me to think and reason on the most simple and prompt mode of affording assistance to persons in danger of being drowned by the Ice breaking beneath them.

If the plan which I have lately devised, and now most respectfully submit to the consideration of the Royal Humane Society, and the Public, be adopted, I feel encouraged to believe it is not going too far to assert that drowning by the breaking of the ice will scarcely, if ever, hereafter occur.

I am therefore induced to recommend that it should be made known at those places to which skaiters resort, that implements are now constructed for giving immediate assistance in every case of danger or difficulty to which persons on the ice can be exposed. This appears to me to be the more necessary when it is considered that the means heretofore in use, though they have sometimes been crowned with success, have too often proved abortive.

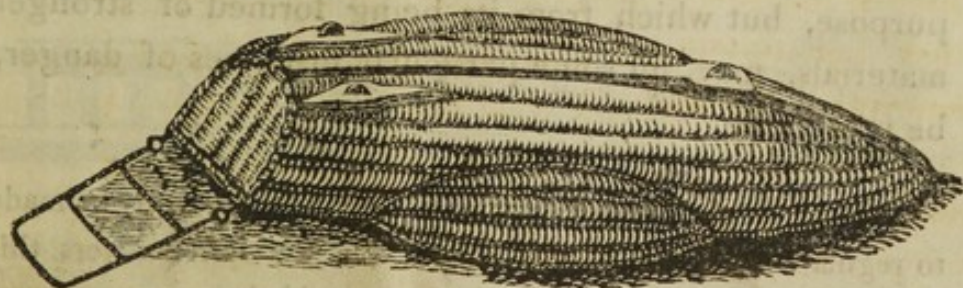
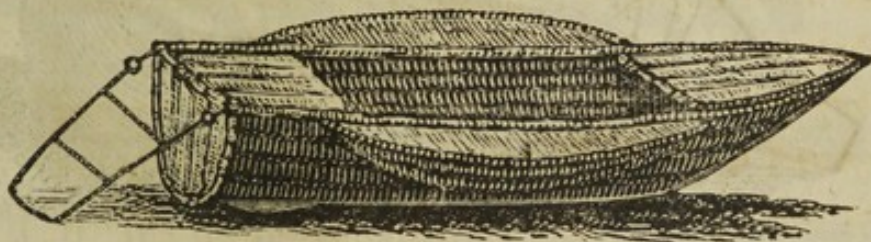
I now beg leave to enter into a detail of the new method here proposed, and will elucidate my suggestions by representing models before the Committee, who will at first sight perceive the simplicity which prevails through every part of this new apparatus; and I do most ardently hope that this system will not only be promulgated by your benevolent Society, but trust that it will be carried into effect throughout the kingdom, and indeed in other countries.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW MODE OF SAVING PERSONS FROM DROWNING.

THE implements necessary for this purpose consist of the following articles, the application of which shall be presently explained.

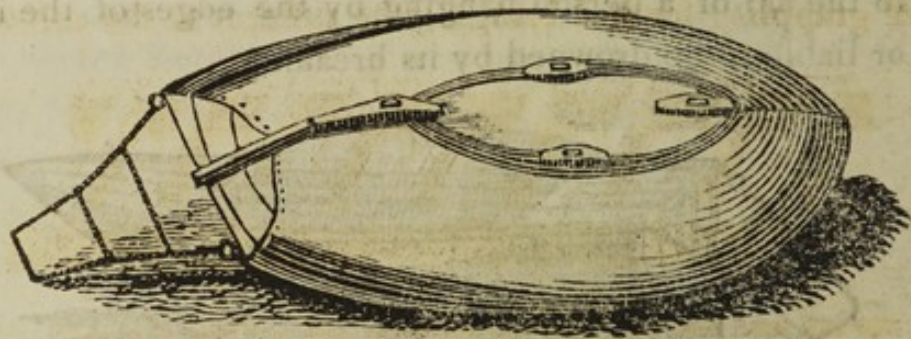
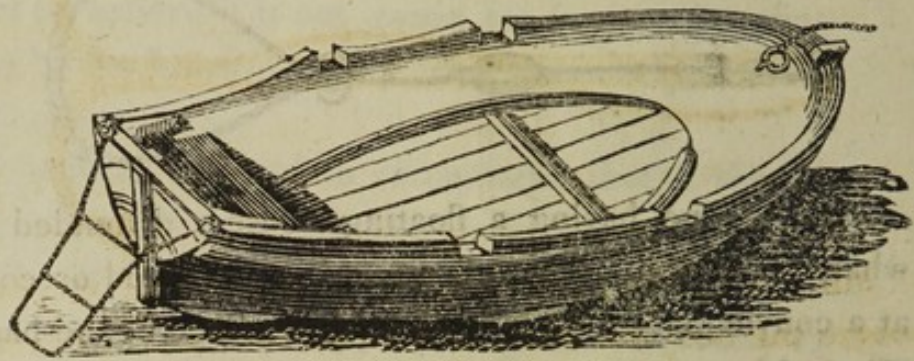


1st. A rope having a floating noose, distended by whalebone, with an egg-shaped piece of wood or cork, at a convenient distance to be easily grasped by the hand. The evident purpose of this rope, is to have it thrown to the aid of a person hanging by the edges of the ice, or liable to be drowned by its breaking.



2nd. A *Portable* gig boat made of *wicker* for the advantage of extreme lightness.

This boat is rendered unimmervible by air, and is made to stand upright on the ice running upon rollers*. It is to be used when at the breaking of the ice the distance is too great for throwing the rope, or when the means at present in use are insufficient to afford relief. The weight of a boat of this nature, will not, I conceive, be more than 16lbs.

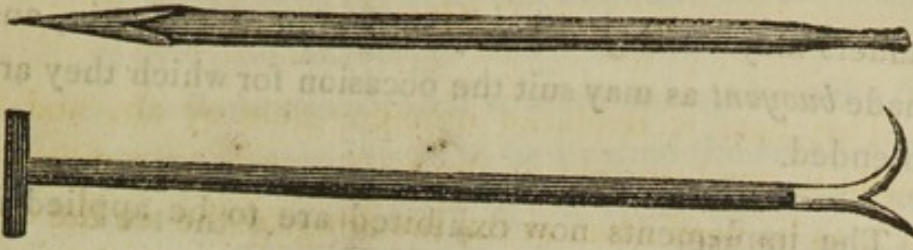


3rd. A small light Jolly boat†, intended for the same purpose, but which from its being formed of stronger materials, may, in some particular instances of danger, be preferable.

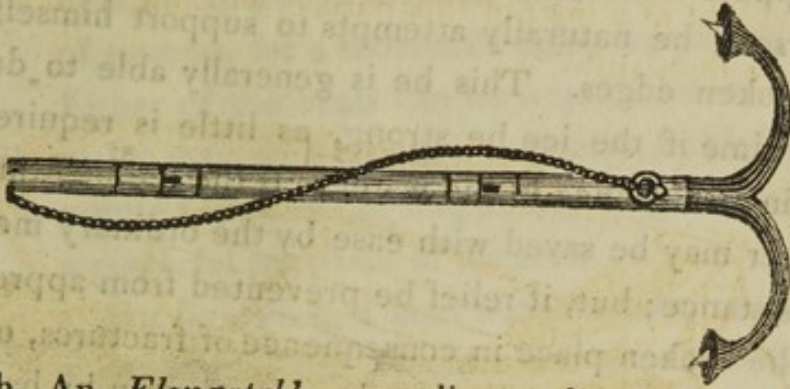
* The roller in the fore part of the boat might easily be made to regulate the direction of the boat, but the sprit answers this end, and all unnecessary complexity is avoided.

† The rullocks or vacancies on the gunwale of this boat are not for the purpose of admitting oars; they are made to receive the frame of the ladder to prevent it slipping.

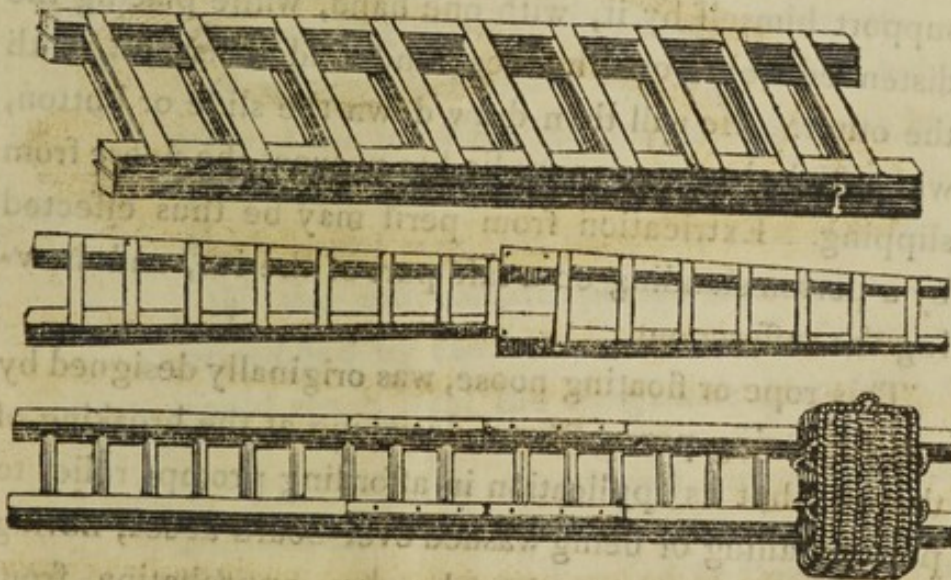
4th.



4th. Sprits armed with iron points, which, by sticking in the ice, are used for impelling the boats forward.



5th. An *Elongatable* grappling rod, which in cases where the body has sunk beneath the ice can be instantly adapted to any common depth of water, for the purpose of grappling for and bringing the sufferer to the surface.



6th. Portable ladders for communicating with the boat from the ice, in cases where the current may have carried the body from the place at which it first sunk. These ladders

ladders may be *lengthened* by *unfolding* or *fitting* in, and made *buoyant* as may suit the occasion for which they are intended.

The implements now exhibited are to be applied in the following manner.

Suppose a case, in which the ice has broken beneath a person; he naturally attempts to support himself by the broken edges. This he is generally able to do for some time if the ice be strong, as little is required to sustain a substance in the water. If the ice be firm, the sufferer may be saved with ease by the ordinary method of assistance; but, if relief be prevented from approaching the broken place in consequence of fractures, or the evident weakness of the ice, the rope thrown by hand, if the distance be not too great, will save the person in danger. On the rope reaching the person, he will immediately lay hold of the egg-shaped piece of wood, and support himself by it, with one hand, while placing the distended noose over his head and under his arm, with the other. He will then draw down the slide or button, with which the rope is supplied to prevent the noose from slipping. Extrication from peril may be thus effected by a person standing on a safe part of the ice, and drawing the sufferer out.

This rope or floating noose, was originally designed by me, for saving persons from drowning at the breaking of the ice; but its application in affording prompt relief to persons falling or being washed over-board at sea, having met with such general and warm approbation from several distinguished experienced and scientific officers of the Royal Navy; I cannot deny myself this occasion
of

of recommending it to the attention of this Society and of every philanthropist and seaman's friend*.

In those cases which so often occur, where the fractured ice is so extensive as to be beyond the reach of ordinary assistance, or of throwing the rope, one of the boats just mentioned is to be used. They are expressly constructed to be as light, buoyant, and portable as possible, as promptness in danger is the best and often the only assurance of success, for a moment's delay frequently proves fatal! Either of the boats can be impelled over the ice by one active man, with very great velocity, by his fixing the iron-pointed sprit in the ice, and forcing the boat forward by a powerful purchase of his arms.

For lightness, a boat *wicker*-made, is the best of any contrivance with which I am acquainted. It may be rendered powerfully unimmervible by tin boxes enveloping air.

Where there is much sharp broken ice to pass through, the jolly boat would answer the purpose better, being stronger, and calculated to meet resistance.

Supposing the person in danger to be holding by the edge of the ice when the boat is coming to his relief, the *stern* should be placed *towards* him, and by a ladder which hangs over that part, the boat is easily attainable.

If the unfortunate person has been exhausted or benumbed by the cold, and has sunk before the boat could reach him, the *elongatable* grappling rod (always

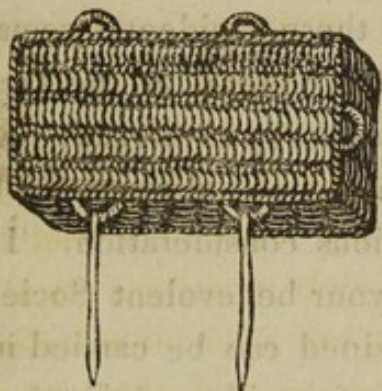
* The Committee of the Society, during the late extreme frost, stationed men on the Thames and Serpentine rivers, who were supplied with the rope described by Captain Manby; and they cannot too warmly recommend it, from the great good derived by its use in preventing the drowning of a *great number* of individuals.

carried in the boat) is to be instantly applied to bring the body up before the vital spark is utterly extinguished.

There is no mode at present, as far as I know, for effecting this desirable object when the body has unfortunately descended to a considerable depth. To obviate this great difficulty, the grappling rod is formed of several joints of any convenient length, say from 6 to 9 feet long. The joints or sockets are all exactly of the *same* size, and fitting into each other indiscriminately, are secured by a spring, so that they are only to be put together till they form the proper length for the occasion, in one strong firm rod.

With this simple instrument the body may be grappled for, if a slight current, which often occurs, should have carried it under the ice. This may be quickly done with success. To prevent the possibility of the body being lost after being attached to the grapple, by the joints giving way, a rope is fixed by a ring fastened to the iron hooks to which there are sharp *guarded* points for catching the cloths, or fastening to the body. The points being guarded, no material injury can be done to the flesh let the hooks catch where they may. Very little force will bring the body to the surface when it is once attached to the grapple, from the well-known principle in hydrostatics which accounts for the buoyancy of any substance lighter than the same bulk of the fluid by which it is sustained.

If the body be brought up at a distance from the strong part of the edge of the ice, the portable ladder will be found extremely useful. One end of it is to rest on the ice, and the other on the boat; or it can be made buoyant by a thin air-tight box cased with wicker, as seen attached to one of the ladders—



Thus answering the purpose of a platform, on which the body may be placed, and be drawn from where it is raised to a secure part of the ice. Should the distance between the boat and the edge of the ice be more than one ladder can reach, it may be lengthened by the addition of another ladder, made to fit (and fasten with a catch,) with its narrowest end to the broader end of the first ladder. The ladder might be also made buoyant by means of that excellent invention by Mr. Eschauzier, the life-preserving cork mattress*, a subject which has already engaged the attention of this benevolent Society.

I beg leave to avail myself of the present favourable occasion of submitting to the notice of the Committee, a new fire-escape ladder which I have just designed. It is simply a rope with nooses distended by flat rests for the feet fixed at convenient distances for stepping from one to the other, and in cases of danger might be instantly fastened by one end to a table or bed-post, while the other is thrown out of window, and thus furnishes a ready escape from fire when perhaps there is no other possible means near those who are in momentary dread of being burnt to death!

* I feel a desire to give publicity and commendation to the ingenuity of every person who employs his talents for the public good.

Having

Having made these incidental remarks, I have now briefly concluded my ideas on the facility of affording relief to persons exposed to perishing at the breaking of the ice, there remains one object more which I earnestly offer to your serious consideration. I am persuaded it is only through your benevolent Society, that the plan I have just explained can be carried into effect. Your wisdom and humanity will no doubt make such arrangements as appear best calculated to promote the intentions of the Institution, and to gratify the feelings of your own hearts in saving the lives of your fellow men.

In making this appeal I should wish to express myself in the most emphatic terms, because my declining health and strength from colds which I have endured while employed in saving Shipwrecked persons, preclude me from taking that active part for the benefit of humanity, which is one of the warmest and most powerful dictates of my heart.

London, Dec. 21st, 1813.

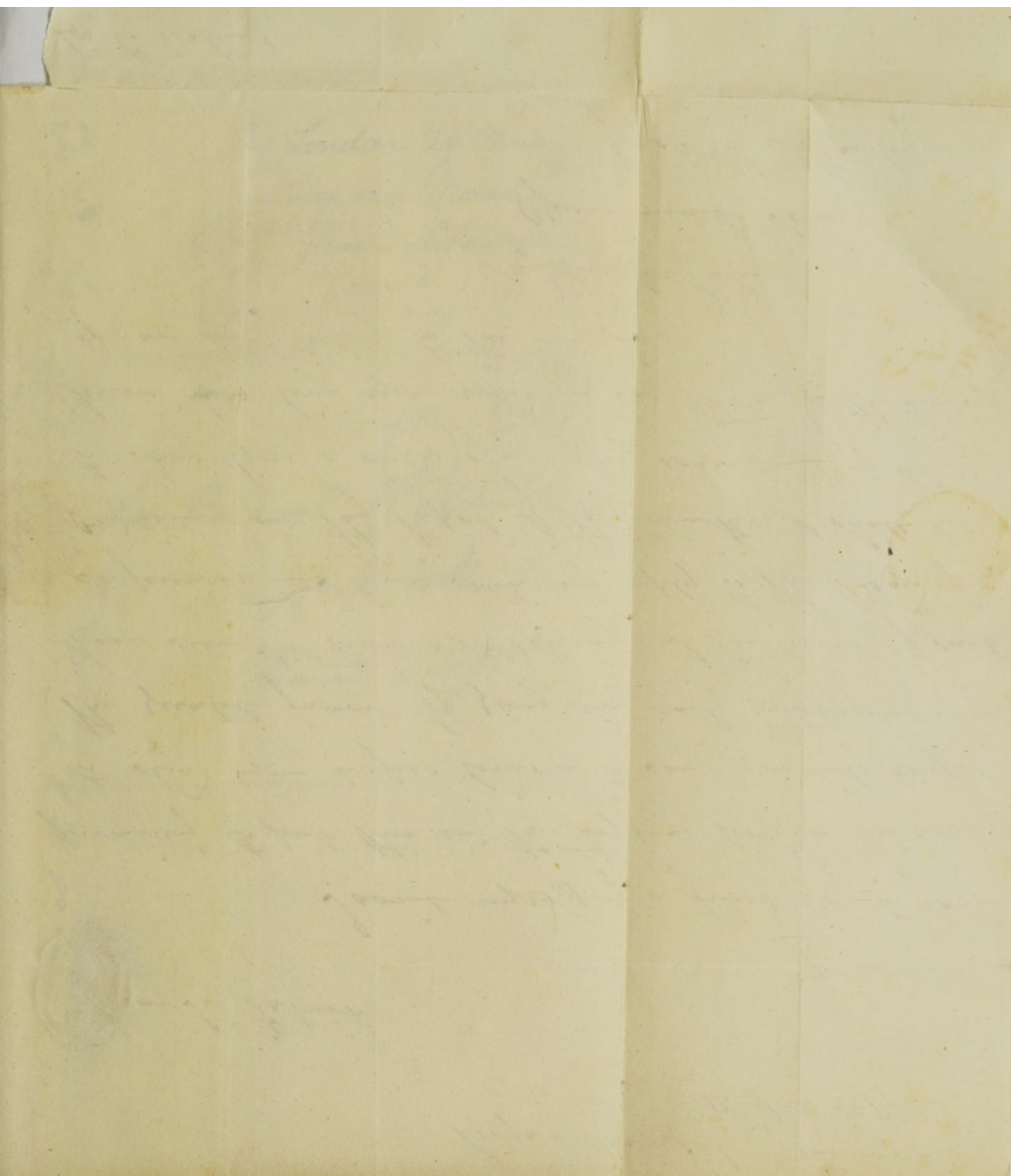
GEORGE WILLIAM MANBY.

Copy sent
Unpaid
Unpaid

Mr. Patrick Walker

7 South Street
Charing Cross
London

151-152
40227



Royal Hospital Greenwich
12 May 1817

Dear Sir Patrick

I avail myself of a friend going to town
promising to put this in the dropping post on his arrival
to send you a few lines - to say you will confer
the greatest favour by giving me early intelligence if you
have seen Mr Rose & Mr Fenning - & the result of such
conferences - I have sent my reply to the Board of
Ordinance on the Report of the Committee, & shall hope
to show you a copy of it very soon - pray let me
know how long you remain in town, & the hindrance
of an early reply to this - I am

My Dear Sir Patrick

Yours most sincerely

Geo. W. Manby

See P. Walker

5th by one & one
Saturday May 5th 1861

My Dear friend

Before I leave this place allow me
to offer you my most grateful thanks for the very
generous interest you have taken in my labours -

But when I consider it of such a nature & unreserved
wholly mankind I am sure with myself well also
blest & thank you - If it is not too much trouble

you would do a most important good to the cause
by taking an early opportunity of seeing Mr Rose, &
give him your opinion of what you saw, & all the
circumstances relating to it - He is a most warm
friend to alleviate the difficulties attendant on the
exclusion of juries, & I am sure your representation
of opinion will have very great weight, & not allow
a public good to be prevented from possible enactment
to me - I have not time to say more than for God bless you

May do not omit to see

Much truly yours

also Mr Curwen & were I that

I might say of the High Exe off
Pole more

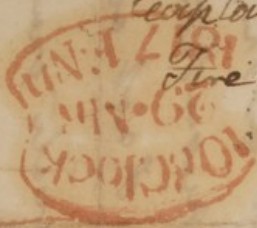
J. A. Mearns

London 29 March

1817

Captain Manby

Fire - Chester



Two
Cups

Sir Patrick Walker

7 Suffolk Street

Charity crops



Nov 31 - 31 South

My Dear Sir

You would expect the greatest favor on me
by favoring me with a few lines although I am at my
Chandler's Dispensary by Thursday next as on the following day
a packet will be sent to me, in which your favor would
be forwarded - My object in making this request to you is for
the purpose of knowing what has transpired in the ~~above~~ ^{above} ~~affair~~
~~disposition~~ in the interview with Mr. Porter, Mr. Farnsworth
& Mr. Tenney - I am sure your kindness will pardon my
asking you to do me this favor, & of endeavoring yourself in a
review that presents so much national & universal good -
I am my Dear Sir
Not your own ever yours
O. W. M.

Your sincere & much obliged friend

Geo. W. M.

Wm. W. W.

Very yours W. W.

Nowick 31 March 1817
Captain Manly
Fire checkers —

Sir Patrick Walker
7 Suffolk Street
Chancery cross
London



Yarmouth Norfolk Tuesday 8 April
1817

Dear Sir Patrick -

Last week I did my self the pleasure
to write to you requesting the favour of a reply to be
forwarded to my Chamber as it would be enclosed in a
packet; that packet is received but alas no letter from
you which makes me apprehensive of it not getting to
hand - The object was to request you to have the kindness
of getting an interview with Mr Rose, Mr Curwen & Mr
Fleming on the subject of your opinion of what you
saw at Woolwich & to pass me with the result of the
conference with those gentlemen - Do therefore my
kind friend favour me with a line addressed to me at
the place by the return of post on the subject, by way
which you will add to the obligations already imposed on

Yours very much obliged
Shelburne

Jos. W. Mordaunt

Yarmouth 8 April 1817
Captain Manly
Five shillings —

17
Sir Patrick Walker
7 Suffolk Street
Chancery Cross
London



Friday Jan

My Dear friend

The experiment which was to be
taken place at Woolwich tomorrow is postponed to
some day next week, in consequence of the Grand Duke
reviewing the Royal Artillery tomorrow at the Lines.

I am most truly
Yours

My dearest

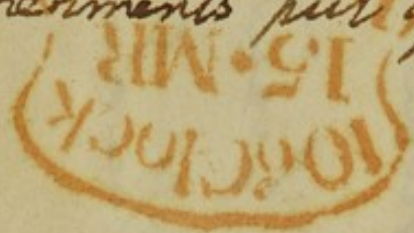
Mr. Lewis

Edinburgh

Edw. Patrick Walker

^{March}
15 ~~April~~ 1817.

Captain Manby -
Experiments put off -



TWO
SUN
ST. ID
NORWICH

Sir Patrick Walker

7 Suffolk Street

Leaving crop

