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Edited by James F. Palmer

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### The Works of John Hunter, F.R.S.

The surgeon and anatomist John Hunter (1728–93) left a famous legacy in the Hunterian Museum of medical specimens now in the Royal College of Surgeons, and in this collection of his writings, edited by James Palmer, with a biography by Drewry Ottley, published between 1835 and 1837. The first four volumes are of text, and the larger Volume 5 contains plates. Hunter had begun his career as a demonstrator in the anatomy classes of his brother William, before qualifying as a surgeon. He regarded surgery as evidence of failure – the mutilation of a patient who could not be cured by other means – and his studies of anatomy and natural history were driven by his belief that it was necessary to understand the normal physiological processes before attempting to cure the abnormal ones. Volume 3 discusses blood and the vascular system, wounds (especially those suffered in war) and infection.

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VOLUME 3

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THE  
WORKS  
OF  
JOHN HUNTER, F.R.S.  
WITH  
NOTES.

EDITED BY  
JAMES F. PALMER,  
SENIOR SURGEON TO THE ST. GEORGE'S AND ST. JAMES'S DISPENSARY; FELLOW  
OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL AND CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, ETC.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.  
ILLUSTRATED BY A VOLUME OF PLATES, IN QUARTO.

VOL. III.

LONDON :  
PUBLISHED BY  
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6. A Case of Paralysis of the Muscles of Deglutition cured by an Artificial Mode of conveying Food and Medicines into the Stomach.
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A  
T R E A T I S E  
ON THE  
BLOOD, INFLAMMATION, AND  
GUN-SHOT WOUNDS.  
BY  
JOHN HUNTER, F.R.S.  
WITH NOTES  
BY  
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## TO THE KING.

*MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,*

*IN the year 1761 I had the honour of being appointed by Your Majesty a Surgeon on the Staff in the expedition against Belleisle.*

*In the year 1790 Your Majesty honoured me with one of the most important appointments in the medical department of the army, in fulfilling the duties of which every exertion shall be called forth to render me deserving of the trust reposed in me, and not unworthy of Your Majesty's patronage.*

*The first of these appointments gave me extensive opportunities of attending to gun-shot wounds, of seeing the errors and defects in that branch of military surgery, and of studying to remove them. It drew my attention to inflammation in general, and enabled me to make observations which have formed the basis of the present Treatise. That office which I now hold has afforded me the means of extending my pursuits, and of laying this work before the public.*

*As the object of this book is the improvement of surgery in general, and particularly of that branch of it which*

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DEDICATION.

*is peculiarly directed to the service of the army, I am led  
by my situation, my duty, and my feelings, to address it,  
with all humility, to Your Majesty.*

*That Your Majesty may long live to enjoy the love  
and esteem of a happy people, is the fervent wish of*

*Your Majesty's*

*Most faithful subject,*

*And most dutiful Servant,*

**JOHN HUNTER.**

Leicester Square,

May 20, 1793.

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## P R E F A C E.

**T**HE philosophic spirit which pervades every part of the ensuing Treatise, and the profound insight which it discovers of the operations of the animal œconomy, both in health and disease, have universally procured for it a high rank among medical writings. We should not perhaps greatly err in stating that its distinctive merit consists in the bold enunciation of the governing laws of life, with reference more especially to the healthy organization, and in the application of those laws to the elucidation of disease. In this respect the Author may justly claim the merit of having originated a new method of investigation, and of having prosecuted this method in a manner and to an extent which was never contemplated by any previous physiologist, either as regards the comprehensive system of illustration which is adopted, or the masterly exposition of the reciprocal influences of the different organic systems on one another. In the introductory discourse to his Lectures on the Principles of Surgery, the Author distinctly declares this to have been his object; for “By an acquaintance with principles,” he observes, “we learn the causes of disease, and without this knowledge a man cannot be a surgeon.” Those, therefore, who apply the ordi-

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nary rules of a petty criticism to the present work will form a very incorrect judgment of its merits, while those who come to its perusal with the expectation of finding a simple exposition of disease, will probably be much disappointed. The reader who would form a just and accurate appreciation of a work of this character, should bring to the task considerable liberality of mind, and at the same time an independency of judgment, which can admit the general propriety of an observation, and yet know how to make those due and necessary abatements which all general propositions require.

The Treatise on the Blood and Inflammation has popularly been considered as Mr. Hunter's chief Work, and that on which his fame as a Physiologist has principally reposed. This opinion in some respects is correct, but in others it does great injustice to the Author; for though undoubtedly the Work in question contains many profound views of the animal œconomy, of unrivalled excellence and value, it never can be regarded as the type and consummation of all his previous researches. In order to evince the absurdity of such an opinion, it is only necessary to glance at the extensive series of preparations contained in his museum, and to reflect on the impossibility of embodying the physiological inferences deducible from such a mass of materials in the limited compass of a volume. From the Author's own allusion to the subject, in his paper on Digestion, as well as from the general nature of the preparations which were made, especially the prolegomena attached to the physiological

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series of preparations, and the numerous highly finished drawings by which these were illustrated, there can be no question that a general treatise on physiology was designed, which, had the Author been spared to complete his plan, would have exhibited in a more just light the originality and comprehensiveness of his mind. To what purpose would he otherwise have bestowed such extraordinary assiduity in compiling ten folio volumes of notes, but that he might, in the decline of his life, complete from that source the great undertaking to which his whole life was devoted?

In treating of the subject of Inflammation, the Author has commenced the inquiry by an investigation into the general properties of the blood, which he proves, by a new train of argument, to be possessed of life, like the solid parts, so as to constitute the chief bond of union by which recently divided parts are united: he next takes a comprehensive survey of the vascular system, and of its functions in health and in disease; and having discussed the subject of union by the first intention, which he considers to be an act essentially different from inflammation, he at length enters on the main subject of his discourse. This he treats in the order of its terminations, and in reference to the various circumstances which have a tendency more or less to modify the local and constitutional phenomena which it presents; and finally he illustrates the whole subject by a series of cases selected from the different organs and structures of the body, and especially by the subject of gunshot wounds. In the course of these inquiries the

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author is not unfrequently observed to diverge into collateral disquisitions, especially on physiological topics, which bear only in a remote manner on the main subject of his treatise, but which, from the importance of the principles which they involve, or else perhaps from the habit to which his mind had been accustomed of considering the body as a whole, it fell within his original purpose to consider. I shall not here stay to discuss the propriety of such a course on ordinary occasions, or whether such an example is to be held out to imitation to inferior minds; but such a course I am convinced was admirably calculated to call forth the immense treasures of Mr. Hunter's experience, and to cement more firmly that alliance between Pathology and Physiology which forms the characteristic feature of his doctrines. In one respect such a desultory mode of composition must undoubtedly be considered as a defect, from its tendency no less to embarrass the reader than to divert his attention from the main scope of the discourse. It is, however, a defect which the author would probably have himself corrected, had he lived to superintend his work through the press, and more particularly if his life had been spared to have given to the world a second edition of this great master-piece of his genius.

When I first undertook the office of revising and commenting upon Hunter I was less fully impressed than I now am with the difficulty of the undertaking, and I should probably have entirely abandoned the task but for the reflection that no weight would be attached to

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the opinions of his commentator beyond what was fairly warranted by the force and justness of his arguments.

The rule which I have chiefly observed in the insertion of notes has been to correct any impressions, arising from the Author's statements, which the progress of science has rendered doubtful. On such occasions, however, I have invariably given my authorities, or assigned the reasons of my dissent, so that, after all, the reader will be left very much to his own judgment. Sometimes I have been able to confirm Mr. Hunter's conjectures by more satisfactory proof, and occasionally I have thought it expedient to collect into one point his scattered statements respecting particular points of doctrine, so that the reader might, in one view, be able to see all that has been said on the subject. I cannot, however, flatter myself that I have attained either of these objects, and still less that I shall escape altogether the imputation of presumption.

Much of the obscurity, so often complained of in the present treatise, is to be ascribed to the peculiar circumstances under which it was given to the world. It was published under circumstances of haste, and at a period of the Author's life when he regarded his state of health as very precarious, and when his faculties, oppressed by repeated illnesses, cannot be considered to have been in their full vigour; in addition to which only a small part of the work was through the press at the time of the Author's death, and therefore it could not receive the full benefit of his corrections, or even of those of his

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PREFACE.

executors, who, in consequence of the numerous professional calls upon their time, were compelled to relinquish the task. Many errors consequently have been allowed to pass unobserved both in the text and punctuation, which often vitiate the sense, and still more frequently render the meaning of the Author extremely difficult of extrication. These have been carefully corrected, and occasionally the correction has been extended still further; but, for the satisfaction of the reader in such cases, the original text has been subjoined at the foot of the page, or the interpolated passages inclosed within brackets.

JAMES F. PALMER.

38, *Golden Square*,*June 1, 1837.*

N.B. The Editor's Notes are distinguished from the Author's by being placed below the line, within brackets. They are also further distinguished by initial letters instead of the usual marks of reference.