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[Alanson E \(1782\)](#). Practical observations on amputation, and the after-treatment, 2nd edn. London: Joseph Johnson.

Title pages

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
O N
A M P U T A T I O N,
A N D T H E
A F T E R - T R E A T M E N T :

TO WHICH IS ADDED, AN ACCOUNT OF THE
A M P U T A T I O N A B O V E T H E A N C L E
W I T H A F L A P :

The whole illustrated by CASES.

BY EDWARD ALANSON,
SURGEON TO THE LEVERPOOL INFIRMARY.

*Believe me, one grain of matter of fact, to a practical surgeon, is
worth a pound of reasoning.*

KIRKLAND'S *Letters to a young Surgeon.*

THE SECOND EDITION, GREATLY ENLARGED.

L O N D O N,
Printed for JOSEPH JOHNSON, N^o. 72, St. Paul's Church-Yard.

MDCCLXXXII.

P R E F A C E.

WHEN we attempt to introduce any new and important deviations from the common mode of practice into general use, and particularly in a point of such consequence, as the directing almost a total change in the mode of performing and after-treating one of the principal operations in surgery, the public have a right to be fully acquainted with the author's reasons and motives for such attempt; and

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such

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such trials should likewise previously have been made, as are sufficient to demonstrate, that the doctrine recommended will bear the test of general experience.

I HAVE taken some pains to inform myself, what other practitioners are doing in other hospitals; and from such unprejudiced authority as I can fully rely upon, I am convinced that too little skin is saved; the muscles are generally divided by a perpendicular circular incision; no union is attempted by the first intention; the parts are dressed with dry lint; and by many the arteries are tied with the needle, including the nerves, veins, and adjacent parts.

HENCE

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HENCE more frequently will arise spasms, brisk symptomatic fever, hæmorrhage, large discharge of matter, retraction of the muscles, and exfoliation. The treatment which it is the intention of this little essay to recommend, may be considered as a powerful preventive of these disagreeable symptoms; and I am assured, our cures are completed in half the time requisite under the common practice: these are my reasons for addressing the public.

I MOST earnestly recommend the treatment here described to the consideration of the army and navy-surgeons. No doubt there are

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are men of experience and judgment in these stations; but I am sorry to observe, that I have seen some late instances of their treatment, and heard of others, where so little attention has been directed to save a sufficient quantity of skin, that the bones have projected, and the cure proved either impracticable, or uncommonly tedious; nor is this unusual where the operation is done even by men who hold a first rank in the profession.

AMONGST all the calamities to which the human species are liable, there is not perhaps one more deplorable, than to be reduced

duced to the necessity of parting with a limb, as the only alternative to preserve life. So strongly is the desire of life implanted by the Divine Architect, that when put to the above test, few persons have resolution to refuse the chance of preserving it, which is given them by the removal of a diseased limb. In this country, both sexes, all ages, the timid and the brave, generally prefer amputation to certain death.

AMPUTATION, as said by an eminent writer, “is an operation terrible to bear, horrid to see, and must leave the person on whom it has been performed, in a mu-

a mutilated imperfect state.” And is not this distressing state much increased, when the operation is done upon so ill-formed a plan, as in some cases to preclude almost the possibility of a cure; or at least, to render it more painful and tedious, besides greatly diminishing the chances of obtaining the grand object, the preservation of life? Yet, that this is frequently the case, we meet with almost daily instances in proof; where nature, although properly assisted, is not able to cure the wound so injudiciously constructed by art.

HAD I been aware of the utility of such an attention, I should
not

not have omitted taking an accurate history of every amputation, at which I have been present. However, the following heads of success may be relied upon, and I hope will answer my present purpose.

PREVIOUS to our improved plan, out of forty-six amputations, at which I was present, and had an opportunity of inspecting the after-treatment, ten died: one, of the locked jaw; two, of hæmorrhage from the whole surface of the stump; four, of the hectic fever, and extensive suppurations; and three, from a spreading gangrene on the surface of the stump.

Eighteen

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Eighteen had an hæmorrhage: six, from the whole surface of the wound; and twelve, from a particular vessel or vessels. In nearly the whole, the symptomatic fever was violent; the startings or spasms frequent; the suppuration large; the surface of the wound extensive; and in all, the first dressings were painful. In most of them, there was an exfoliation; in several, a sugar-loaf stump; and in some, the wound remained incurable.

THE above was a mixture of hospital and private practice, and I believe most people, who pursue the old method of operation, have not better success.

I HAVE

I HAVE never refused to operate upon any case that has presented, where a single person in consultation has thought such operation adviseable; and since I began the method here recommended in Case I, I have operated in thirty-five cases, such as promiscuously occurred at the Liverpool Infirmary, without the loss of a single patient. The symptomatic fever; the startings or spasms; the discharge, and pain of dressing the wound, have in all been slight. There has not been a necessity to remove the dressings on account of hæmorrhage, in a single instance; nor the smallest exfoliation,

liation, except in the case of Mary Jones. Vid. p. 246.

AT the expiration of a month from the operation, the wound has either been perfectly healed, or less than a sixpenny piece; in all, the wound has been ultimately cured, and the cicatrix remarkably small. (I do not include the cases, where I have operated with a flap, of which a particular account is given in this work.) Had not these cases occurred in a hospital where the practice has been made as public as possible, I should not have ventured to publish an account, which I fear but few would have credited.

credited. The operation has likewise been done in this place by others, with great success.

AT different periods of time, many of the hints mentioned in this treatise, may have been pointed out by others. It is difficult to advance any doctrine on this, or any other operation, that can claim a genuine originality. However, it is not my intention, either to depreciate the memory of the dead, or offend the sensibility of the living; but I cannot pretend to assign to its real origin, every single hint which I have received through the course of the last

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twelve years. During this period I have paid an unremitting attention to the subject, and have reason to believe, that the operation and after-treatment, as now offered to the public, have been practised with a degree of success unknown in any former period of time.

I AM much obliged to several eminent practitioners, for the communication of many useful cases, hints, &c. These I have endeavoured to dispose of in such a manner as will, in my opinion, be most conducive to the service of the public, and
I hope

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I hope give no offence to the authors.

SINCE all speculative reasoning on these subjects is very fallacious, when placed in competition with experience, it has been my aim to deduce the doctrine of this work from practice only: yet, when we consider how slowly the most valuable improvements are adopted, it must be expected that the plan here recommended, will make but a gradual advance. I must request, that those who do me the favour to adopt the practice, will execute it exactly as recommended; for every single portion

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is so intimately connected with the rest, that they cannot remove one part, without danger of bringing down the whole fabric.

IF I have expressed myself in such a manner, as to enable the reader to put in practice the means recommended, I have fully attained what I aimed at. Should it be allowed that I have made a step towards the improvement of surgery, I shall be much pleased; since it is an art, which, when practised with judgement, humanity, and honour, is an ornament to human nature; and for its certainty in relieving many of the most distressful

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distressful accidents, to which all are liable, must ever be considered, as of the utmost importance to the happiness of mankind.

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