ACCOUNT
OF
A CASE
OF
CURIOUS IMPERFECTION OF VISION.

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COMMUNICATED BY
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IN the Philosophical Transactions, there is an account of a remarkable imperfection of sight, which was hereditary ; a similar imperfection exists in a relation of mine, a statement of which I have now the honor of laying before the Medical and Chirurgical Society.

The subject of the present case is a boy eleven years old, clever, lively, and healthy. His eyes are grey, with a yellow tinge surrounding the pupil. He does not call any colour green. Dark bottle green he calls brown, confounding it with certain browns. Light yellows he calls yellow, but darker

yellows and light browns he confounds with red. Dark brown he confounds with black. Pale green he calls light red ; common green he terms red. Light red and pink he calls light blue ; red he calls by its proper name. Blue, both dark and light, he calls blue. On looking through a prism he said that he could discover no colours but red, yellow and purple. I shewed him paper stained with red radish-root, this he said was blue ; I dipped this paper in diluted nitrous acid, which converted the pale red colour into scarlet, he then called it red. I placed this scarlet colour by the side of paper stained with litmus ; he said that both colours were the same, but that the litmus paper was a lighter shade than the other. I then placed the scarlet paper on the grass, and afterwards on green baize ; he said that the grass and the baize were of the same colour as the paper, but that they were a shade lighter. I made him put on a pair of green spectacles, which he called *red* glasses ; he said that every body and every thing in the room had a reddish cast when seen through them. The border of the room had a blue leaf with a green edge, this he called a blue leaf with a red border. A woman passed by with a basket on her arm ; he told his mother that the woman had fowls in it, for that he saw the *red* feathers hanging out ; these proved to be *green* leaves with which she had covered her butter. I tried him in a variety of ways, and found him always consistent ; he told me at last, “ What

you call purple and pink and blue, are so like each other that I cannot well know one from the other.” His mother told me that he called the crimson moreen curtains of his bed red by candle-light, but that when he gets up he says that they are dark blue. I asked him what the colour of the eyes of one of his sisters was, he said “a bluish red *.” Her cheeks he said were a purplish blue.

This boy has four sisters, in neither of whom does this imperfection of sight exist. He has an infant brother of whose vision nothing of course can as yet be known. The peculiarity of sight as to colours is derived through his mother, in whom however it does not exist; she has a sister who is also free from it, but she has no brother. Her father, who is now living, has this imperfection of vision. This gentleman, Charles ———, had two brothers and three sisters; one of the brothers (John) had also this peculiarity, but the other brother and all the sisters were without it. John had male children who died young, of whose vision nothing is known; he left a daughter now living, who is free from it; she is married, but has no children. Charles was in the navy, and several years ago he purchased a blue uniform coat and waistcoat with *red* breeches, to match the blue. I asked him once the colour of some

* Her eyes are grey.

railing which was painted a dark *invisible* green; he said it was singular that it should be coloured red, which he considered it to be. I shewed him a doyley which was red, having a leaf of the same colour traced out on it, and I asked him the colour of it. He, having been so often mistaken and laughed at, said with a degree of triumph, "Why the ground-work is red, but the leaf is of course green." It is to be observed, that neither he or his grandson use the word green as a term chosen by them, but they employ it only when they suspect or know that the colour is what others call green, such as the colour of grass or of leaves; for instance, when I began my examination of the boy, I asked him the colour of a leaf of trefoil: "oh," said he, "I know that it is green." But when I afterwards placed it by the side of the radish-paper which had been dipped in diluted nitrous acid, he then said that the paper and the leaf were of the same colour, and that he should call the colour of the leaf *red*, but that he knew that others called leaves green. John ———, his grandfather's brother, has mistaken a cucumber for a lobster, and a green leek for a stick of red sealing-wax. His daughter was one day dressed in a pink slip; she asked him the colour, he said "sky blue," to which she replied, "If you call my pink slip blue, what do you call my pink face?" to which he answered, that the colour of her cheek and that of her slip, though she called both pink, did not appear

to him the same, but that he could not describe the difference. He never called blue pink ; nor red green ; though he called pink blue ; and green red *. I have not been able to ascertain whether any of the predecessors of John and Edward had this imperfection of vision.

* This may be observed likewise of Charles and his grandson.