The Vicary Lecture

ON THE

LIFE AND TIMES OF WILLIAM CLIFT,FIRST CONSERVATOR OF THE MUSEUM OF
THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS
OF ENGLAND.GIVEN IN THE THEATRE OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS,
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BY

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On the 14th of February, 1792, the household of John Hunter, on the east side of Leicester Square, was the scene of two events. In the first place, its master's birthday was being celebrated; sixty-four years before he had been born on the farm of Long Calderwood, situated within sight of the smoke of Glasgow. In the second place, a country lad, William Clift, had arrived from Bodmin, in Cornwall. Probably no one in the household knew, or cared to know, that the day of his arrival was also William Clift's birthday; he was born at Bodmin on February 14th, 1775, and thus on the day of his arrival in Hunter's house had just completed his seventeenth year. He was a poor lad; all he possessed in the world were the clothes he stood up in, with "four changes of shirts and neckcloths," unless we add certain indentures which he is said to have carried in his pocket, wherein Hunter had undertaken to teach him, "in his best manner," to draw, write, and dissect. It is difficult to believe that Hunter could have made a promise about writing and drawing, for he could not draw and his writing was indifferent, whereas Clift was already a skilful draughtsman and an exquisite penman.*

Thus in this household in Leicester Square we have brought together, from Scotland and from Cornwall, two men of diverse ages whose lives were destined to be linked together in an altogether peculiar manner. The bond between them was soon to be broken; Clift had only served his master for twenty months when the catastrophe at St. George's Hospital left him stranded in Hunter's derelict Museum. For fifty years Clift remained the honest steward of the great collection which Hunter left behind, and the undaunted upholder of his name and fame.

There was more than a mere coincidence of birthdays to link these two men together. As Clift aged, those who had known Hunter saw in him a remarkable physical likeness to his master. Both were small, active men; Hunter's height was only 5 ft. 2 in. To those who insinuated that this likeness was due to more than a coincidence Clift would reply: "If I thought what you insinuate were true there is not a Duke in London I would touch my hat to."

* A list of the documents and publications from which the facts given here have been drawn is added at the end of this lecture.

Clift's Parentage and Upbringing.

Before following young Clift to the place he was to occupy in Hunter's household we must turn aside for a moment to trace his early life in Bodmin. His birth-place—a flour mill—was swept away when the London and South-Western Railway built its station in the valley about one mile to the west of the centre of the town. But the little stream which turned the wheel of Burcombe Mill is still running; there are still men and women who remember the old dilapidated millhouse.† In 1775, when his youngest son, William, was born, the affairs of the miller, Robert Clift, were hastening from bad to worse; he had to leave the mill, and three years later died in Bodmin at the age of 58, leaving his wife, Joanna Courts, and his family, in poverty. The widow and daughters earned a scanty and precarious livelihood by carding and spinning wool in the winter and by working in the fields in other seasons—each member earning from fourpence to sixpence a day. "My mother," says Clift, "starved herself to save threepence a week for my schooling."

Then in 1783, when Clift was eight years of age, his mother died, and thus, to use his own words, "I was cast adrift on the wide wide world." He did not drift very far; he entered the service of Mr. George King, a nurseryman at Bodmin, at fourpence a day. Mr. King was given to brandy and water, or as Clift expressed it, "to brandy without water," and in his cups, and after them, was passionate and dangerous. In one of these fits, some two or three years after Clift entered his service, he chased, while mounted on horseback, his nimble-footed apprentice from the nursery. The young apprentice made his foreman and fellow workmen merry by producing a graphic caricature of the incident, but when shown to Mr. George King it made him so angry that young Clift again found himself "adrift in the wide wide world." He thought of enlisting, but as he put it, "neither Mr. George King or King George" would have anything to do with him. He

WILLIAM CLIFT.

First Conservator of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.
Appointed 1800; retired 1842. Died 1849.

(From a Lithograph in the Conservator's Room at the College.)

thereupon obtained further employment in Bodmin with one who carried on an extensive business as farmer and corn merchant. Here he found himself, so he declared, in the congenial company of horses; and here, too, but for an incident to be mentioned presently, he would likely have remained, for as we shall see he had ingrained within him that spirit of timidity and tendency to self-criticism which makes men seek for service rather than for command. Men of his nature are often the hardest judges of their fellow men, and to this Clift was no exception.

Near by Bodmin Church is the Priory; from its grounds issues the stream which flows by Burcombe Mill. In Clift's youth the Priory was occupied by Major Gilbert, and his wife, Mrs. Gilbert, had been at school with Anne Home,

† I gladly avail myself of this opportunity of acknowledging my indebtedness to Miss M. S. Collins of St. Gurons, Bodmin, who has supplied me with many details relating to Burcombe Mill and Clift's early history; Miss Collins, through my friend Mr. Walter Rogers of Falmouth, has presented a water-colour sketch of Burcombe Mill to the Hunterian album kept by the Librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons. To Mr. Victor Plarr, the Librarian, I am deeply indebted: he has placed the manuscripts in his keeping most freely at my disposal. In the College there are preserved a lithograph and a wash drawing of Clift and also a plaster bust, done in 1842.

John Hunter's wife. Mrs. Hunter spoke of Mrs. Gilbert as "her oldest and dearest friend." They knew at the Priory that Hunter had lost the services of William Bell—his draughtsman, amanuensis, and assistant in the Museum. In 1789 Bell, who had been in Hunter's service for fourteen years, had accepted a surgeoncy in Sumatra, and although three years had come and gone since his departure Hunter could find no one fit to become his successor. It was upon Mrs. Gilbert's recommendation that this Cornish lad, earning some tenpence a day, had his course of life suddenly diverted; from a poverty-stricken home in Cornwall he was suddenly transported to one of the most remarkable households which London has ever seen—to become the worthy successor of William Bell.

Hunter's House and Museum.

The household in which young Clift now found himself an inmate stretched from Leicester Square eastwards to Castle Street—now converted into Charing Cross Road. Our intimate knowledge of the shape and size of the establishment we owe to Clift; forty years after he first entered it he sat down late one night and drew a ground plan on which are entered all details relating to Hunter's house. The property which Hunter had acquired in 1783, with a lease which had only twenty-four years to run, was built on a long narrow strip of ground only 30 feet wide. Everyone is familiar with our modern town houses standing upon a strip of ground which stretches from a main street to a back lane; the house faces the main street, the stables, and coach-house stand on the back lane; the garden occupies the space between. Hunter's establishment was built on the same plan. The house, facing Leicester Square, had four tall windows on its drawing room or first floor, where Mrs. Hunter, her flaxen hair turning grey, entertained the select literary and artistic circle in which she moved. The second and third floors—bedroom floors—had also their four windows; the ground floor had only two windows—dining room windows—for the front door with Hunter's plate was to the visitor's right as the house was approached. The door opened into a commodious hall—where the butler had his chair. Passing through the hall one entered a passage leading along the ground floor of the house to the garden or yard; to the right and left of this passage or back hall were Hunter's consulting room and his study—rooms with which Clift was to become familiar. At the Castle Street end in place of stables there was a roomy dwelling, where Hunter's five house-pupils had quarters, and where Elizabeth Adams presided as housekeeper. As time went on she came to take an important part in Clift's life. Here was the dissecting room and quarters for Robert Haynes, who looked after it and the lecture room, and here, too, was Clift's abode. In the garden or yard stretching from the one house to the other, about 110 feet in length and 30 feet in width, Hunter had erected a building with an inside measurement 51 feet long and 28 feet wide. The ground floor was divided so as to serve as a reception room towards the Leicester Square end and a lecture room towards the Castle Street end. The lofty upper floor of this building served as a Museum; round it ran a gallery on the shelves of which stood Hunter's wonderful collection of physiological preparations—the part of the Museum which became Clift's special pride. From the gallery a fossil or cabinet room opened off.

The Museum did not occupy the whole length of the garden or yard; between it and the house on Leicester Square (No. 28) there was room for the building in which Hunter kept his collection of drawings and prints and where his artist worked. The space between the Castle Street house (No. 13) and the eastern end of the Museum was enclosed by a glazed roof, covering the sunken basement or souterrain where Hunter kept his six horses, his coaches, and the skull of a large whale-bone whale. To reach the Castle Street level the coachman had to drive up an inclined way.

Life in Hunter's Household.

Clift found himself a member of a very large establishment. If we include Earl's Court, which was really an experimental station run in connexion with Leicester

Square, there were fifty people depending on Hunter for their sustenance or pay. Down in the basement kitchen floor there was the butler, the housekeeper (Mrs. Martin), the Welsh cook (Mary Edwards), Mrs. Hunter's maid, two housemaids, and the needlewoman. William Clift apparently became acquainted with the kitchen; at least he wrote of this period: "I knew there was plenty of eating but no pocketing; Mrs. Martin (the housekeeper) looked too sharp after all but her own friends." Then down in the stables there was Mrs. Hunter's coachman and her footman as well as Mr. Hunter's coachman and footman. In the drawing room there was the tall and elegant Mrs. Hunter; for her and for Miss Hunter (afterwards Lady Campbell) Clift acquired and retained an unbounded respect and devotion. Miss Hunter had her visiting election master. Then, in vacation times, there was also young John, down from learning expensive habits in St. John's College, Cambridge. Workmen and tradesmen kept coming and going all day long.

We have touched on the social side of John Hunter's house; we must now turn to its professional activities so far as they concerned William Clift. The dining room had to be cleared at 9.30 sharp, as patients began to arrive then. Hunter was busy in his consulting room until 12.30; at this hour the carriage had to be at the door and he set out to see his hospital and his private patients, hoping to reach home again for dinner at 4, and have time for a nap from 4.30 to 5.30. With this part of the day's work Clift had nothing to do; nor was he concerned in the teaching and lecturing which went on in the Castle Street end of the premises, nor with his master's duties as surgeon-general; there was a special secretary, with his quarters in the Castle Street house, to look after army affairs. It was early in the morning before the professional round commenced and late in the evening and night after it was finished that William Clift had his busy time. He had to meet Hunter in the dissecting room at 6 in the morning—to fetch, carry, inject, draw, and learn to display structures with a scalpel. Then, when Hunter's nap in the evening was over, he had to be in the study to write fair his master's rough notes of dissections, of clinical observations, and of new thoughts and ideas which had occurred in the course of the day's round. It must have taken the lad some months to fathom the system, orderly as it really was, in which his master's manuscripts and folio volumes were arranged. During the thirty years Hunter had been researching and building up his Museum the subjects of his inquiry were ever broadening, new accounts had to be continually opened in his scientific ledgers and old general accounts distributed under a series of new headings. When Clift joined him he found about one hundred special subjects being pursued, a special fasciculus being kept for each. Then there were the manuscripts of the eighty-seven lectures on surgery, always being augmented and improved; there were records of his clinical cases and *post-mortem* examinations; but beyond all these in value were the ten folio volumes, each devoted to a particular section of the Kingdom of Life, in which were inscribed in its appropriate place the dissections, measurements, and drawings made by Hunter in the early morning hours. Three of these volumes lay on the table when Reynolds painted the master's portrait. One had been opened to show us the illustrations of a page in the folio devoted to man and apes—from which we may infer that Hunter was a pre-Darwinian evolutionist. On the table below this folio lies a sheet of drawings which tell us that Hunter had invented a method of measuring the facial angle of man and beast. His Museum was but a concrete illustration of the contents of his manuscripts. This harvest of the lifetime of a man of genius—all save a few fragments and the manuscripts which Clift had copied and thus preserved—were used in Sackville Street, some thirty years later, to set a baronet's chimney on fire!

Mr. Everard Home.

There remains to be mentioned a very important inmate of Hunter's household, when Clift entered it in 1792—Everard Home, aged 36, brother of Mrs. Hunter and assistant surgeon to St. George's Hospital. Hunter's health had been failing for some years; his arteries had become hard and his heart filled them with difficulty. He had need

of assistance; Home lived in and helped him in his operations, did the night work, read his lectures in the classroom in the Castle Street establishment, and looked after the pupils. Clift found him, on the morning after his arrival, having his hair powdered, engaged to be married and on the best of terms with himself. He was almost patronizing in his attitude towards Hunter's merits. Twenty years before, as a mere schoolboy, and "ambitious to tread the paths of science," he was, so he has told us, "struck with the novelty and the extent of his (Hunter's) researches"! Only two years before Clift's arrival and at a time when Hunter was ill, Home was elected to give the Croonian Lecture at the Royal Society, and read without a qualm of misgiving an essay which, in substance, was Hunterian from beginning to end. In later years he felt he had risen higher than Hunter and was apt to criticize the opinions of his old master.

Let no one think Everard Home was a man of mean ability; he was recognized by his contemporaries as an excellent practical surgeon and a clear-headed man of business. He had a masterful way of dealing with men; he was ambitious—particularly for scientific eminence. He pursued this aim throughout his life with an unexampled diligence, and if only his discoveries had possessed the value he placed on them his career would have been one of unqualified success. All these attributes we must bear in mind if we are to understand the relationship which became established between Home and Clift, ending in the tragedy of the manuscripts.

The Dêbâcle.

In the spring of 1793, Clift having passed his first year under Hunter's roof, things in the household, although prosperous on the surface, were really moving to a catastrophe. War had broken out with France and Hunter was busy with his duties to the army. The income of the house was large, but the expenditure was lavish. Hunter, to get a supply of ready cash, had been borrowing; he had to accommodate urgent creditors, and Clift, although worshipping the ground on which Hunter trod, was not happy. The suit of clothes he had come in and "the four changes of shirts and neckcloths" were verging on rags; he had no pay, no means of renewing his wardrobe!

"Then Mr. Hunter, probably to avoid having a footman in green found writing with him in his study, ordered me a coat of twopenny cloth, without a collar, and lined with serge up the fronts to the neck-band, a pair of corduroy breeches and speckled worsted stockings, unbound shoes with leather strings and full of nails. I perfectly remember the respectable appearance I made on that Sunday the new clothes came home. . . . Haynes (the dissecting room assistant) several times gave me a sixpence. . . . so low they (the servants) looked on me. . . . condescended to call me the West Country Hickey, though what it meant I never exactly understood. . . . Not trusted with a candle and therefore I must go back to bed through the dead bones. . . . I had sense enough to know that things could not get worse and must mend."—*From a fragment of his autobiography preserved in the Sherborn papers, Library, R.C.S.*

With Hunter's death on October 16th, 1793, the great Leicester Square establishment came down with a crash. Mrs. Hunter had to leave the house, and for a time her drawing room was occupied by lodgers. The whole staff was dismissed save two: Mrs. Elizabeth Adams, the housekeeper in Castle Street, and William Clift, who was at first allowed one shilling a day board wages to look after the Museum—an allowance afterwards commuted to £21 a year. Home sought to continue Hunter's lectures which were given under the Museum, but after two years he gave up, for he was an indifferent teacher. Clift attended his second course and tried to take notes from him. The care of the Museum devolved on Hunter's executors, Everard Home and Matthew Baillie—both young men struggling for practice. Home was 37; Matthew Baillie (John Hunter's nephew), one of the finest characters to be found in the whole realm of medical biography, was 32; he was chief partner and lecturer in the medical school founded in Windmill Street (Piccadilly) by his uncle William Hunter. He invited Clift to attend the lectures given by himself and by his partner Mr. Cruickshank—a privilege of which Clift availed himself to the full. So far as concerned the Museum and Clift, Everard Home was the senior, dominant, and acting executor. Immediately after Hunter's death he became most prolific in the output of papers—both

scientific and surgical. He stepped into Hunter's shoes and attempted to use the Museum and Clift's services just as Hunter had done. In the intervals between Home's visits Clift studied the contents of the Museum and particularly Hunter's manuscripts, which had been removed from the study and were now kept in a small room off the Museum. There was nothing Clift loved better than transcribing, and in these years in which he nursed the Museum alone and worked for Home he copied in his beautiful hand, and for his own use, nearly half of Hunter's writings.

Clift's Finances.

During the seven years which followed Hunter's death, while the Museum lay derelict waiting for an owner, Clift's salary was £21 per annum. We are therefore surprised to find, in 1799, this young man of 25, on the limited income just mentioned, leading a young bride, Caroline Amelia Pope, aged 19, to the altar in St. Martin's Church, Trafalgar Square, and taking her home to the house in Castle Street to set out together for what proved to be a long and very happy journey through life. Fortunately Clift was one who kept a very minute account of his income and expenditure, and when we turn to the ledger in which he recorded his incomings in these seven years we get a clue as to how it was done. At Christmas, 1794, more than a year after Hunter's death, we find that Home has given him a Christmas box of 10s. 6d. "for helping at lectures"; for transcribing the MS. of a book he earned £2; for transcribing the MS. of a novel £1 10s.; for copying a play by Joanna Baillie (for Mathews), £1 1s. At Christmas, 1795, things were looking up a bit; he was paid £5 5s.—the first instalment of his settled salary—and to this he appends the note: "The first money I have received since Mr. Hunter's death—excepting 7s. per week as board wages and tailor's bills for clothes." Then his pencil began to have a market value; Baillie employed him to draw the illustrations for his *Morbid Anatomy* at £1 1s. a plate; he had similar commissions from Monro of Edinburgh, Hey of Leeds, Sir Joseph Banks, and many others.

Home got off cheaply; all his drawings, dissections, inquiries, and odd jobs were done for a Christmas box of £5 5s.; but in 1800, when the Museum had passed into the keeping of the College of Surgeons, a new arrangement had to be instituted. Home had promised, and Clift expected, that his salary as conservator under the College would be fixed at £100 per annum, but £80 was the sum fixed upon. Whereupon Home magnanimously undertook to make the deficiency good by purchasing every Christmas £21 worth of 3 per cent. stock and placing it to Clift's credit until the capital produced an annual income of £21—a promise which he kept, and as we shall see, in later years, claimed thereby to have been Clift's magnificent patron. For this sum Clift supplied his patron with the splendid drawings which adorn a hundred papers published by Home in the *Philosophical Transactions*, besides those in the great volumes on *Comparative Anatomy*. For this sum Clift carried out investigations and experiments for Home year after year; he looked after his papers for him, did his odd jobs at his house in Sackville Street, and was always at his beck and call, although Clift after 1800 was the servant of the College and not of Everard Home.

To this period, too, belongs another important event. In 1799, just before the Museum passed into the care of the College, Home ordered the manuscripts to be removed from Castle Street. Clift loaded a cart with them and conveyed them to Home's house in Sackville Street.

The Board of Curators.

When the College of Surgeons took over the care of Hunter's Museum the managing body, then known as the Court of Assistants, appointed seven of its members to form a "Board of Curators" to look after the new charge. In the summer of 1800 the Board met at Castle Street, and amongst their instructions to their newly appointed conservator were clauses instructing him to live and sleep in the Museum and to accept no gratuities from visitors. Although Home was not yet a member of the Court of Assistants, he was present at this early meeting of the Board and volunteered, with the aid of the Conservator, to prepare a complete catalogue of the collection—an offer

which was at once gratefully accepted. By 1803 Home had been elected to the Court of Assistants, and was naturally appointed a member of the Board of Curators, and thus acquired a dominant influence in the affairs of the Museum. He set Clift down to compile catalogues of all sections of Hunter's Collection; these catalogues were mere lists of contents, but were drawn up with great care and written into folio volumes with meticulous accuracy. Home was too busy looking after his hospital, his practice, and the output of scientific and professional papers to take any part in the work of cataloguing.

Board of Trustees.

In the summer of 1805, on a Saturday afternoon, the Trustees, appointed by Parliament to see that the College of Surgeons carried out the conditions attached to its trust, met for the first time. The Trustees inquired about catalogues and about lectures, and were told that the College had already spent £2,547 on the Collection, and that, as the lease of the Castle Street Museum was almost up, the College had bought for £4,600 Mr. Jenner's house (No. 42) next door to the College House (No. 41) on the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields as the site of a new Museum. It was resolved by the Board of Curators not "to make the narrow finances of the College the measure of their proceedings." I suspect the phrase is Home's; at least in seeking Government aid to build a new museum, just as on the occasion of the purchase of the Collection by the Government in 1799, Home was chief ambassador in the transaction.

Building of the New Museum.

The houses on the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, where the Corporation of Surgeons sought a home in 1796, were built on the same plan as Hunter's house in Leicester Square. The strips of land on which the houses had been erected stretched from Lincoln's Inn Fields in front to Portugal Street behind; the strips were wider but not quite so long as the site on which Hunter had put up his Museum. The College house was No. 41; the next house to the west (No. 42) became the Museum house—where Clift was ultimately to live—and its garden was the site on which the new Museum was to be built. In the spring and summer of 1806 Clift moved the Hunterian Collection from Castle Street* and stowed it safely away in the rooms of the Museum house, until the new building was erected behind; it was not until 1813 that the new Museum was finished and opened to visitors. The conservator's chief duty was to conduct visitors round the Museum twice daily and explain its contents to them. Of this daily duty Clift never tired.

Everard Home as Master.

In 1808, in his 42nd year, Everard Home was appointed Sergeant-Surgeon to the King; he was elected in 1811 to give the first course of lectures on comparative anatomy; the Board of Trustees begged him to publish the lectures, but he modestly declined. Then in 1813, having become Master of the College, a baronet, and having given a second course of lectures, he acceded, with all diffidence, to a renewed request from the Hunterian Trustees to publish, and succeeded in persuading the Board of Curators to spend £165 of the College money on their distribution gratis. It was in the year of his Mastership that the Prince Regent paid a visit to the Museum; a scarlet cloth was spread at the gateway for the reception of the royal visitor. Home's colleagues on the Board of Curators complained that they had not received due notice of so distinguished a visit. The Master excused himself on the ground that the honour was altogether unexpected, leaving his colleagues perplexed to explain the foresight which had provided a scarlet cloth of reception for the occasion.

Renewed Demands for a Catalogue.

The Board of Trustees kept urging the need of supplying proper catalogues for the Museum. In 1816 Sir Everard's colleagues on the Board of Curators were resolving to

* Mrs. Adams, the housekeeper, refused to move; Clift had to obtain an order from the Board telling her to do so, and also that "she was to take her orders from the Conservator." She died on April 22nd, 1812.

divide the Museum into sections, each member undertaking the task of preparing a catalogue for one department. At this meeting of the Board Sir Everard struck an attitude and demanded that the duty and honour of preparing catalogues must be his and his alone. He made the Conservator arrange an important section of the Museum, wrote a short guide or synopsis for this section, and in the meantime (1817) resigned from the Board of Curators and was elected to the more influential Board of Trustees. He did not in any way lose his prestige in the Court of Assistants, for in 1821, when this body became known as the Council of the College, they elected him to be their first President. Then in 1822 he resumed the Hunterian professorship and gave a course of lectures which his colleagues on the Board of Trustees begged him to publish. He humbly submitted; two more folio volumes on comparative anatomy were issued, rich in plates prepared from Clift's drawings. Again the Board of Curators purchased volumes for distribution.

Burning of the Manuscripts.

It was in June, 1823, just over a century ago, that Clift helped to correct the last proofs of these two handsome tomes of Hunterian lectures. In the spring of this year Sir Everard Home placed certain fossil bones, discovered in caverns near Plymouth, at Clift's disposal for description and publication. Clift gave a very accurate description of them which was read before the Royal Society. Just after this paper was read Home championed the election of William Clift to the Society; on May 6th, 1823, this act of justice was done to Clift—he became F.R.S. We have several letters which show the relationship which existed between Home and Clift at this time: "My dear Clift, Will you dine with me to-day and read over your paper—on the Plymouth fossil bones?—Yours truly, Everard Home." (November 1st, 1822.) "My dear Clift,—I wish you to attend my lecture at the Hospital on Tuesday at 12. Let me have the coloured prints of the blood and the sections of the aneurysm for Tuesday." (January 3rd, 1823.) Sir Everard still held, in the relationship between the two men, the place of patron and master.

On a summer afternoon, July 26th, 1823, Home was driving in his carriage to Kew with two companions—one was William Clift, the other was Robert Brown the botanist and discoverer of the nucleus. They were to attend a small and select society named the Medico-Botanical, of which Home was the leading light. Looking at Clift, Home announced that the night before firemen had forced their way into his house, because his chimney was on fire; he went on to explain that the damage had been done while burning Hunter's papers. "You don't mean," said Clift to the baronet, "you have burned Hunter's manuscripts." Home said he had done as he said; to which Clift relates that he made this reply: "Then, you may as well set fire to the Museum too." One would have supposed that the atmosphere in this coach driving towards Kew would have become sultry, but apparently nothing more happened, and the Medico-Botanicals met and parted as usual. On Home's side there was no trace of a breach, for we find him on September 23rd—two months later—still addressing the conservator, "My dear Clift, You are to be here (Sackville Street) on Saturday at one. Brown and Bauer have already been told, so you have only to write to Aiton." Clift adds a note to this letter saying he was unable to attend on this day. In November it was still "My dear Clift." At this juncture, August, 1823, Sir Everard's co-executor—Dr. Matthew Baillie—died. He never knew the fate which had overtaken Hunter's manuscripts, exactly thirty years after their author's death.

William Clift Turns on Home.

Clift, on returning from Kew, took an early opportunity of telling the chairman of the Board of Curators, Sir William Blizard, Hunter's old pupil, what had happened to the manuscripts. Nothing was done then; the first step was taken in February, 1824, when Clift was called in by the Board of Curators, which included Cline, Norris, Astley Cooper, Abernethy (Clift's particular friend), Anthony Carlisle, and Lynn. Clift enumerated the manuscripts, and

rightly held them to have been an intrinsic part of Hunter's Collection and essential for the preparation of a real catalogue. A month later (March 5th) the Board requested Sir Everard to hand over the manuscripts which they had just learned were, or ought to be, in his possession. On March 9th Sir Everard replied that he had destroyed the manuscripts because they were unfinished and unfit for the public eye; further, he had extracted from them and published all that was essential; and finally, that he had closed his thirty years' executorship by destroying them, which, so he wrote, Hunter had instructed him to do! On March 16th the Board replied to Sir Everard that it could not believe that which his words seemed to imply, and again demanded the MSS. On March 22nd Sir Everard informed them that Hunter had made two last requests to him—one, that his body should be examined; the second, that his manuscripts should be destroyed. In the meantime Clift, who knew the inner affairs of the Sackville Street house almost as intimately as those of his own, had learned that there were still some Hunterian manuscripts in existence. So, on April 6th, the Board of Curators addressed a third letter to Sir Everard, saying that they "had good reason to believe" that he had still Hunterian MSS. in his possession. To this third letter Sir Everard replied, three days later, that he declined further correspondence with the Board of Curators. So the Curators carried, "with painful reflections but in pursuance of duty," the matter to the higher authority, the Board of Trustees.

Sir Everard Home is Tried—and Let Off.

On May 24th, 1824, about six weeks after the correspondence just mentioned took place, the Trustees held a special meeting—ostensibly to consider the preparation of proper catalogues for the Museum. Lord St. Helens was in the chair; Mr. Peel and many other distinguished public men were present. Sir Everard, being a trustee, was also present. He laid the correspondence with the Board of Curators before his fellow Trustees, and begged that it should be entered on their minutes. The Trustees then decided to confer with the Board of Curators, Home having the grace to withdraw when this conference was being held. After the Curators retired he returned, and on being questioned replied that he had destroyed the manuscripts as a duty but he was willing to offer all possible help in the preparation of catalogues. He did help in a small degree, for at the next meeting of the Trustees, on November 27th, he sent a sealed packet, which, when opened, was found to contain descriptions of about fifty of Hunter's own accounts of *post-mortem* examination of cases. At the following meeting, on February 19th, 1825, another sealed parcel came with a like series of Hunter's *post-mortem* records. Clift began to think "the phoenix might yet arise from its ashes," but no more came then. It was at the February meeting, just mentioned, that Sir Everard informed the Trustees. "The Conservator feels himself so outraged at my destroying these papers that he has not only complained to the Board of Curators but asserts that in my whole life I have never done him one act of kindness. In the face of this declaration I beg to state that through me he is now in possession of £1,370 in the 3 per cents." We have already seen how Clift had more than earned this sum. The transaction reflects Home's clever business ability, and at the same time the lengths he was prepared to go to crush one who had given him thirty years of faithful service.

Sir Everard Home's Death.

In his diary for August 31st, 1832, Clift makes this entry: "Reported at the Board of Curators that Sir Everard Home died this morning at half-past three, at his house at Chelsea Hospital; 77th year; of Scots extraction; born at Hull Dec. 6th, 1756. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*" Then, in another entry, he alleges that the glowing eulogium of Home which was pronounced at the Royal Society on the occasion of his death was written by the deceased gentleman himself! Six weeks after his death young Sir Everard Home, Captain of H.M.S. *Racehorse*, handed Robert Keate, the ex-President of the College, a bundle which was found to contain Hunter's famous folio volume on *The Natural History*

of *Vegetables*, and also ten separate manuscript fasciculi. Seven years later (February 14th, 1839), when young Home entered the theatre to hear Edward Stanley deliver the Hunterian Oration, he handed Robert Keate, again the President of the College, another sealed packet. This contained Hunter's folio volume on *Fossils*, wherein we learn that Hunter had been thinking forty years ahead of the geologists of his time. The open page in the Reynolds portrait tells us that he was seventy years ahead of his contemporary anthropologists. Alas! no further discovery of Hunterian MSS. had to be reported.

What was Home's Motive?

What motive led Sir Everard Home to commit such an act of vandalism? Clift supposed, and his supposition has usually been accepted, that it was to keep the public from discovering how many discoveries and observations Sir Everard had stolen from Hunter's manuscripts. I do not believe this to be the true reason. We have seen, in his correspondence with the Board of Curators and Trustees, that he not only admitted but claimed as a merit that he had extracted and published all that was of value in Hunter's manuscripts before burning them! We have seen that Home was vain, ambitious, extremely conventional, and orthodox in his beliefs. Hunter was the exact opposite—he was heterodox; there were in his writings statements which would have made the hair of the orthodox stand on end if all his works had been published in 1793. Home declared they were unfit for the public eye, and we may safely infer that he counted Hunter as in error when he was heterodox—Home himself saw the dire fate which overwhelmed William Lawrence when he spoke out his true thoughts concerning man's relationship to animals in the theatre of the College in 1816. Home, fearing the contumely which would descend on Hunter's memory, as well as on the reputation of his living executor, thought he was doing his old and wayward master a true service when he destroyed his unpublished manuscripts. It was vain stupidity—a dangerous possession—rather than criminality, which lay at the root of Sir Everard Home's crowning act of vandalism.

Conclusion.

In 1827 Richard Owen, only 23 years of age, came to Clift's rescue and showed all the world how a catalogue should be written of a great collection of Comparative Anatomy. There is no space in which to tell how James Paget came in 1842 to render a similar service for the pathological side of the Museum. Richard Owen married Miss Clift, and his father-in-law's self-confidence declined as his own grew. Clift's nerve was sapped by the tragic death of his wayward son from an accident in the autumn of 1832. The father hoped to see his son his successor. When the Board of Curators—by then known as the Museum Committee—met on June 7th, 1842, Clift, who was now in his 67th year, was left standing at the door while Owen went in to help in the transaction of business. Clift was presently informed that his salary of £400 per annum was to continue for the rest of his life, that he was to move out of the Conservator's quarters in the College, and that Owen was to move in. He retired to Stanhope Cottage, near Mornington Crescent, off the Hampstead Road, and there, on June 20th, 1849, he died in his 75th year. His wife died six weeks before him. Richard Owen had inscribed on his tomb in Highgate Cemetery: "He carried a child-like simplicity and single-mindedness to the close of a long and honoured career." Faith in himself may have waned, but his faith in Hunter was never shaken.

The data of this lecture have been drawn from the following records and books:

Sherborn Papers in the R.C.S. Library; contains a fragment of Clift's autobiography.

Collection of letters to William Clift from Sir Everard Home and from Sir J. Everard Home, ranging from 1805 to 1840. Library, R.C.S.

William Clift's Museum Diary, 32 vols., from 1811 to 1842 inclusive; preserved in the Library, R.C.S.

William Clift's note-book containing survey of College House and Museum House, Lincoln's Inn Fields, with plan of Museum in Castle Street. Made about 1806.

William Clift: Personal memoranda and accounts. R.C.S. Library, No. 276/h/10, 1794 to 1814.

Ditto. MS. folio in R.C.S. Library numbered 276, containing Clift's memoranda relating to his private expenditure.

Ditto. Note-book. R.C.S. Library, 1800 to 1820.

Ditto. His personal Account book for 1824.

Minutes of the Board of Curators, 1800 to 1850.
 Minutes of the Board of Hunterian Trustees, 1805 to 1850.
 Stephen Paget: *John Hunter* (Masters of Medicine Series), 1897.
Journal of Caroline Fox, p. 137.
 William Lawrence: *Hunterian Oration*, 1846.
 Frederic C. Skey: *Hunterian Oration*, 1850.
 Dr. James Finlayson: *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL*, 1890, vol. i, p. 738.
 Thos. M. Stone: *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL*, 1890, vol. i, p. 865.
 William Clift: List of Sir Everard Home's papers in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Library, R.O.S.
 Ditto. Evidence given before the Parliamentary Medical Committee, 1834. *Lancet*, July 11th, 1835, p. 471.
 Ditto. Experiments to determine the Influence of the Spinal Marrow on the Action of the Heart in Fishes. *Phil. Trans.*, 1815, vol. 105, p. 91.
 Ditto. Some Fossil Bones discovered in the Limestone Quarries of Oreston. By Joseph Whidbey, F.R.S.; with a description of the bones by W. Clift. *Phil. Trans.*, 1823, vol. 113, p. 81.
 Ditto. Some Account of the Remains of Megatherium sent to England from Buenos Ayres by Mr. Woodbine Parish. *Proc. Geol. Soc.*, 1835, vol. 3, p. 437.
 Ditto. On the Fossil Remains of Two New Species of Mastodon and of other Vertebrated Animals found on the left bank of the Irawadi. *Trans. Geol. Soc.*, 1829, vol. 2, p. 369. *Proc. Geol. Soc.*, 1834, vol. i, p. 69.

RECURRENT OR HABITUAL DISLOCATION OF THE SHOULDER-JOINT.

BY

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RECURRENT dislocation of the shoulder-joint is an uncommon condition, the real nature of which appears to be little understood. It may almost be said to be peculiar to athletes and epileptics—a rather curious association which, as I shall show, is not without etiological significance. Most of the former class are powerful, healthy, athletic young men to whom the frequently recurring dislocation from trivial causes is a great and serious disability. In epileptics the dislocation sometimes recurs with every fit. The dislocation is nearly always anterior. I have only seen one case of posterior recurrent dislocation. That case was in a woman, and she was not operated upon.

The condition has been attributed to abnormal laxity of the capsule of the joint, and to weakness of the surrounding muscles. The abnormal laxity of the capsule is supposed to be due to stretching or imperfect healing of that structure after the reduction of an ordinary traumatic dislocation, and it has been thought that too early and too vigorous use of the arm may be the cause of the defect.

Various Operations.

Two types of operation have been performed for the relief or cure of this disability: (1) Operations designed to diminish the size of the capsule. These comprise various folding, plicating, plication, or overlapping procedures, with or without incision or excision of a portion of the capsule. (2) Operations designed to give support to the capsule, particularly at its lowest part where the dislocation is believed to take place during movements of abduction. The most favoured of these operations is that of Clairmont and Ehrlich, in which a strip of the deltoid muscle is transplanted in the form of a sling beneath the joint, and is supposed to contract and hold up the head of the humerus when the arm is abducted.

Both these types of operation are based upon erroneous ideas of the pathology of recurrent dislocation of the shoulder. In the first place, the capsule in these cases is not unduly lax. The capsule of the shoulder-joint is normally a lax structure, but more than one surgeon has commented upon the difficulty of raising a satisfactory fold when doing a plication operation for recurrent dislocation. Secondly, the muscles are not weak. There may be a little wasting after this, as after any other injury to the shoulder-joint, but the powerful musculature that is usually exhibited by these patients is a sufficient commentary on this point. Thirdly, the joint does not need support below, for it is not here that the dislocation takes place.

It must be admitted that these operations have sometimes been successful in preventing the recurrence of the

dislocation, but this result has usually been due to limitation of the normal movements of the joint by the operative procedure. One surgeon, indeed, has suggested that the operation might be simplified if it were done deliberately with this purpose, and he proposed to graft a band of fascia between the chest wall and the humerus in order to limit the movement of abduction to 60 degrees.

Causes of Recurrent Dislocation.

It has been too readily assumed that recurrent dislocation is an unfortunate sequel of ordinary traumatic dislocation, and I have known medical men reproach themselves quite unnecessarily for their treatment of the original injury. Recurrent dislocation has nothing whatever to do with ordinary traumatic dislocation of the shoulder-joint. It is an entirely different injury, and it is produced in an entirely different manner.

Ordinary dislocation of the shoulder is the commonest of all dislocations of the joints. It is caused by a fall on the abducted arm. In extreme abduction the neck of the humerus impacts against the acromion process, and by leverage the head is forced through the lowest and weakest part of the capsule between the subscapularis and triceps muscles. When such a dislocation is reduced, the rent in the capsule heals rapidly and soundly, and the dislocation rarely, if ever, recurs.

But the dislocation which afterwards becomes recurrent is caused, not by a fall on the abducted arm, but by a fall either directly on the back of the shoulder or on the elbow which is directed backwards and only slightly, if at all, outwards. The head of the humerus is forced out of the joint, not by leverage, but by a direct drive from behind forwards. In its passage forwards the head shears off the fibrous capsule of the joint from its attachment to the fibro-cartilaginous glenoid ligament. The detachment occurs over practically the whole of the anterior half of the glenoid rim. The reason why the dislocation recurs after reduction is that, whereas a rent in the fibrous capsule heals rapidly and soundly, there is no tendency whatever for the detached capsule to unite spontaneously with the fibro-cartilage. The defect in the joint is therefore permanent, and the head of the humerus is free to move forwards over the anterior rim of the glenoid cavity on the slightest provocation.

In quite a number of the cases the original injury is stated to have occurred at football, and it should be noted that in this game, at least, a player is seldom sent sprawling with his arms out, but, when he falls or is thrown to the ground, it is usually in some moment of strenuous action, when his muscles are tense, and his arms are more or less close to his sides. Usually he is too preoccupied to make much attempt to save himself, and in falling backwards he is likely to strike either the back of the shoulder or the point of the elbow, which is directed backwards. The epileptic, too, falls with his muscles tensely contracted, and he, of course, makes no effort to save himself. Frequently the arms are drawn backwards and little, if at all, abducted. So that, if he falls backwards, he is likely to strike either the back of the shoulder or the point of the elbow. Thus both athletes and epileptics are liable to sustain dislocation of the shoulder-joint by direct violence rather than by indirect force or leverage.

Some cases have been described in which fractures, either of the anterior margin of the glenoid cavity or of the greater tuberosity of the humerus, have been associated with recurrent dislocation. Such fractures have not been seen in any of my cases, but it is easy to see how they might be caused by the direct force which produces the initial dislocation. They must, however, be regarded as incidental, and not essential, to the recurrent dislocation. The essential feature is the detachment of the capsule from the fibro-cartilaginous glenoid ligament.

The Operation Recommended.

I have now exposed this typical lesion at operation in four consecutive cases. A satisfactory exposure cannot be obtained by the anterior incision ordinarily employed for arthrotomy and plication operations on the capsule, and