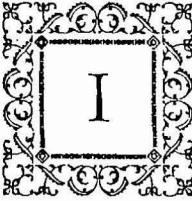


John Hunter's Private Press

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T is curious, considering the detailed study of every aspect of John Hunter's life, how little attention has been paid to the fact that most of his books were printed in his own house. There are at least sixteen other medical men who printed their own books, of whom, from a typographical point of view, Charles Estienne is the most famous, though his great anatomy was printed by his stepfather Simon de Colines.

John Hunter's first book, *The Natural History of the Human Teeth*, was published in 1771 by Joseph Johnson of St. Paul's Churchyard, being printed by Thomas Spilsbury of Snowhill, with sixteen engravings by Jan van Rynsdyk. Johnson was one of the leading publishers of the second half of the eighteenth century, a kind-hearted man who would often buy from impecunious authors manuscripts which he had no intention of publishing.

In addition to Hunter's book, Johnson published for Joseph Priestley, Erasmus Darwin, Maria Edgeworth, and the Reverend John Newton. Newton was curate of Olney when William Cowper came to the little Bucks village to recover from his first mental breakdown, and though the gloomy parson had a disastrous effect on the poet's health, yet it was he who persuaded Johnson to publish Cowper's poems which gave him and his readers so much pleasure. Hunter's printer Spilsbury was also one of the leading members of the trade; he had taken over William Strahan junior's premises on his death and was noted for his accuracy and integrity. The *Natural History* was published two months before Hunter's marriage, though much of the work had been completed twenty years earlier; it is said that Johnson's generous advance was used to meet the expenses of the wedding. John had taken over the lease of his brother's house in Jermyn Street some three years before, but Anne's honeymoon was spent in the country cottage at Earls Court, which must have been a strange contrast to her father's large house in Suffolk Street.

During the first seven years of his marriage nothing further was pub-

lished, though there were a number of contributions to the *Philosophical Transactions*; then in 1778 appeared the second part of the *Natural History of the Teeth*, dealing with their diseases and treatment, which may have been edited by William Combe.¹ This was also published by Joseph Johnson who, in the same year, reissued the first treatise with a new title page, while the two works appeared together as the second edition; he published a third edition in 1803. Johnson arranged with the continental booksellers to issue editions in Latin, Dutch, and German which may not have pleased Hunter overmuch.

When the lease of the Jermyn Street house expired in 1783, Hunter had to find somewhere else to live, but he needed a much larger place to accommodate all his collections and a lecture room, for he had been renting Greenwood's rooms at 28 Haymarket since 1773. As usual he found what he wanted, a large house on the east side of Leicester Square with a house behind it in Castle Street which is now part of Charing Cross Road. Between the two houses he built a lecture room and a large conversazione room with the Museum above.

In 1786 two more of Hunter's books were published, *A Treatise on the Venereal Disease* and *Observations on Certain Parts of the Animal Economy*, but the imprint was 'sold at No. 13 Castle Street, Leicester Square' without any mention of a bookseller or printer. It has been assumed, and quite rightly, that Hunter had the books printed in his own house and acted as his own publisher. Indeed Jesse Foot² wrote that there was a room for a printing warehouse and a press and another for the sale of his books, and that a synod, which consisted of Sir Gilbert Blane and Drs. Fordyce and Pitcairn, met to correct his writings. Foot recounts how he came to buy one of the books at Castle Street and found John Andree, one of Hunter's most able pupils, folding up the sheets while women were stitching them. Where the press room was is not clear; it is not shown in the ground floor plan which Clift drew from memory in 1832, though in the back parlor or house-pupils' room in Castle Street there was a large bookcase for Hunter's works and presumably this was where they were sold. Clift notes that when the Hunterian Collection was moved to Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1806, the College of Surgeons paid £38 for 'the Great-Parlour sofa and chairs and floor cloth, two lead cisterns and the press from the garret in Leicester

1. L. G. Stevenson, 'The elder Spence, William Combe and John Hunter,' *J. Hist. Med.*, 1955, 10, 182-196. H. W. Hamilton, 'William Combe and John Hunter's Essay on the Teeth,' *ibid.*, 1959, 14, 169-178.

2. Jesse Foot, *The life of John Hunter* (London, 1794).

Square'; this might be the printing press, but it might equally well have been a large cupboard.

About twenty years ago I was staying with John Fulton in New Haven and while looking at Harvey Cushing's Hunter Collection in the Yale Historical Library, I found a copy of the *Treatise on Venereal Disease* with annotations by William Clift,³ John Hunter's devoted secretary and guardian of his collections. On the title page Clift had added 'Printed by John Richardson,' a most important clue, for Richardson's name appears as the printer of *The Treatise of the Blood* which George Nicol published after Hunter's death, and an examination of the various Castle Street books suggests that they all came from the same press.

Clift's annotations set me looking for more information about Hunter's press and so I came on a little manuscript volume which is now in the Hunterian Library at Glasgow and has so far as I know never been studied in detail before. It has a curious history. It seems that in 1872 a Dr. W. A. McKellar was living at Free Town, Sierra Leone, when the Company of African Merchants were giving up their trading station there. A Mr. Brodie, their representative, allowed McKellar to go through their books, most of which were cheap novels, but amongst them he found this volume which he realized was one of Clift's memoranda, though no one has any idea how it got to Sierra Leone. In 1886 Dr. McKellar presented it to the Hunterian Library at Glasgow and apart from a short account by John Finlayson⁴ in 1890 it has been largely ignored.

The volume consists of three sections: first, a list of Hunter's staff at Leicester Square and Earls Court; secondly, detailed accounts of receipts and expenditure for the executors, Everard Home and Matthew Baillie, from the time of Hunter's death until 1808; and thirdly, a fascinating though somewhat acid account of Everard Home's troubles with his publisher Nicol and printer Bulmer, which deserves an article of its own. It is the accounts in the second section which are of such interest, because they reveal a great deal about the Castle Street printed books. They confirm that John Richardson was Hunter's printer and that he had two pressmen, one of whom was called Long. Richardson lived in the Philanthropic Reform Buildings in St. Georges Fields, Southwark, but who was he? There were a number of Richardsons in the printing and publishing trade in London in the eighteenth century of whom the most famous was Samuel Rich-

3. Yale University. *The Harvey Cushing collection of books and manuscripts* (New York, 1943), H518.

4. J. Finlayson, 'Account of a MS volume by William Clift, relating to John Hunter's household and estate; and to Sir Everard Home's publications,' *Brit. med. J.*, 1890, 1, 738.

ardson, the author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe*. Shortly before Samuel died, his prosperous printing business in Salisbury Court was taken over by his nephews William and John Richardson, but in their hands the business was not very successful and collapsed after William's death in 1788. So it could well be that it was this John Richardson whom Hunter employed.

From Clift's accounts it would seem that about 1,000 copies of the first editions of the *Venereal Disease* and *Animal Economy* were printed. The *Venereal Disease* sold well and a second edition appeared in 1788, again from Castle Street, but now the imprint reads 'Printed and sold at 13 Castle Street, Leicester Square and by G. Nicol and J. Johnson.' It was a common practice for a printer to send a set of proof sheets to Dublin where a cheap edition was quickly printed and imported into England to be ready for sale as soon as the original work. Hunter had hoped to overcome this by having his books printed in his own home, but he failed, as American, French, and German editions appeared in 1787. His publishing friends Johnson and Nicol felt ill used as they had been denied their share in its success, so they took part in the second edition and distributed it to the trade. The second edition of only 500 copies was completely reset but rather carelessly, as there are a large number of printers' errors and very little change in the text. In the Wellcome Museum there is a copy dated 1787 which Le Fanu⁵ has described as a reissue, but I think it is a made-up copy of the first edition with a false title page. The title page is printed in a boldface type, unusual until 1830, and not found in any of the other Castle Street books, which are all in Caslon old face, and this has been pasted on to the roughly torn stub of the missing title page. Probably a former owner had a copy of the first edition lacking a title page and had this new title page set up by a jobbing printer who made an error in the date.

The Yale copy of the *Venereal Disease* with Clift's annotations is the second edition, of which about 130 copies had been sold before Hunter died, and in the succeeding seven years Mrs. Adams, the housekeeper at Castle Street, sold a further 99 copies at a guinea and was allowed to retain the trade percentage of 3/- a copy. During the same period Nicol sold 42 copies which he received in sheets and in 1800 he took over the remaining stock consisting of 40 copies bound in boards and 200 copies in quires of which nearly 60 were either badly stained or lacking the plates. Nicol was able to dispose of the rest to the trade at 17/6 and, after deducting his 10% commission, paid £175 to the estate.

5. W. R. Le Fanu, *John Hunter. A List of his books* (Cambridge, 1946).

A third edition of the *Venereal Disease* appeared in 1810 edited by Sir Everard Home, but this time it was printed by W. Bulmer, Nicol's ordinary printer. Home used the text of the first rather than the second edition, but it is clear by collating the annotations in the Clift copy that Home must have had access to it, for he incorporated many of Clift's amendments without actually using Clift's words and made a good number of other amendments of his own. It is often difficult to date Clift's manuscripts as he repeatedly worked over them making subsequent additions, and it is probable that he did this in his copy of the *Venereal Disease*. For example, Hunter mentions the projection of the posterior portion of the prostate into the urethra, and Clift has added a note 'Sir Everard Home's Third lobe which he describes as a discovery in 1806'—not a very fair comment as Home, both in the Royal Society paper and in his book *On the Treatment of Diseases of the Prostate Gland*, quotes Hunter's observations in full.

The *Observations on . . . Animal Economy*, which consisted of amended versions of papers already published, was put on sale at Castle Street eight months after the *Venereal Disease* treatise, and it was not surprising that it did not have the same ready sale. It took six years to dispose of the first edition of 1,000 copies. The second edition of 500 copies, which had two additional papers and was completely reset, came out in 1792 and like the second edition of the *Venereal Disease* had the addition of Nicol and Johnson's names on the title page. In the first year over 100 copies of this second edition were sold, but after Hunter's death the sales fell off badly; by 1800 only thirty-four had been sold at Castle Street and Nicol had disposed of seventy-two, though he reduced the trade price from 16/- to 13/6, and when he settled his account with the executors by a payment of £44, he still had 274 copies on his hands.

Of the *Treatise on the Blood*, we have even more precise information as it was published during the period of Clift's account keeping. The dedication is dated 20 May 1793, but only a third of the proofs had been corrected by Hunter before his death, and it fell to Matthew Baillie and Everard Home, who wrote the prefatory biography, to supervise its publication. It appeared on 11 November 1794 in an edition of 992 copies and is the only one of Hunter's books which reveals on the title page that it was printed by John Richardson, though there is no mention of Castle Street, George Nicol being the sole publisher. Everard Home received a prepublication copy bound in morocco and twelve copies in boards for presentation, while nine copies went to Stationers' Hall. Nicol charged about £18 for

advertising in the newspapers, magazines, and reviews, and prior to publication had already disposed of 477 subscription copies in sheets to booksellers at 24/-, while the retail price was 30/-, or 31/6 in boards. During the next five years, at the annual sales, Nicol sold a further 160 copies but only seven were sold at Castle Street. When the account was settled in 1802, 323 copies, of which twenty-five were imperfect, were still unsold, and the estate received just under £700; five years later Nicol paid a further £300 for all the unsold copies of Hunter's books.

We can also learn from Clift's accounts something of the costs of printing the *Treatise on the Blood*. Richardson the printer was paid £88.13.8. between March and November 1794 and in August 1794 there was a bill for paper of £90.13.0. These accounts do not represent the whole cost of printing as the book had been on the stocks since 1793. It probably cost in all about £250, since the usual charge at this time was between £2.10.0. and £3.0.0. a sheet. Apart from Sharp's engraving of the Reynolds portrait for which he had received £50, the eight plates had all been engraved, as usual, by William Skelton who was paid £80; one of these had been drawn by Monsieur St. Aubin, who was the resident draughtsman at Earl's Court, and two others by William Bell, who was Hunter's anatomical assistant and draughtsman from 1776 until 1789 when he went to Sumatra as an assistant surgeon in the East India Company. It was to replace him that in 1792, on his seventeenth birthday, William Clift arrived at Leicester Square from Cornwall on six months' trial; he was to guard Hunter's collection and reputation until his death seventy-seven years later. Bell had hoped to improve his fortune but within two months he had died of fever, and there is a note in Clift's accounts in January 1796 of a payment of £21 to Bell's executors with the comment 'Poor Bell, in arrears to him too, too bad.'

Although the *Treatise on the Blood* was the last of Hunter's books that Richardson printed, there is a little more to be said of the Castle Street press as Richardson was also printer to the Lyceum Medicum Londinense, the medical student society which Hunter founded with George Fordyce in January 1785. At first it met in Hunter's Lecture Room in the Haymarket, but after the move to Leicester Square the meetings were held in the large conversazione room, known as the Lyceum Medicum, built between the two houses.

George Fordyce was a remarkable character, an Edinburgh graduate, who came to London and studied anatomy under William Hunter and became firm friends with John. About 1760 he began lecturing and soon was

the foremost medical teacher, giving clinical lectures at St. Thomas's Hospital where he was a physician, as well as courses on the theory of medicine, chemistry, and materia medica at his house in Essex Street. He lectured every day of the week from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., his lectures on the three subjects being given one after another. He believed that one should eat only once a day, a principle which he adopted for twenty years until he succumbed to some gastric disorder at the age of sixty-five.

The Lyceum Medicum used to meet every Friday between 8:30 and 11 p.m. during the winter and spring, the first hour of each meeting being devoted to presentation of medical cases, then one of the members read a paper which was discussed. Membership was of various types. The principal teachers in London were honorary members, while teachers in the provinces could be corresponding members. Ordinary members were of three grades, those who had taken a qualification and were in practice, of whom there were about fifty, those who were attending hospital or were house pupils (this was the largest group, numbering 100 in 1787 and over 300 in 1792), and lastly those who were just starting their medical studies, who at first were quite numerous but they soon moved up into the second class. The Society had its own library, and each year a gold medal (of which the College of Surgeons has an example) was awarded for the best essay on a set subject. Reports of the proceedings of the Society were said to have been published in the *London Medical Journal* and its successor, *Medical Facts and Observations*, but inspection of these journals fails to confirm this. It continued as an active society until 1805 when it became absorbed into the Westminster Medical Society which itself merged with the Medical Society of London; the original minute books of the Lyceum Medicum are in their library.⁶

Although the Lyceum was not the oldest student medical society, being antedated by the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh (1737), the Middlesex Hospital Medical Society (1774), and the Medical Society of Oxford (1780), a detailed study of its proceedings and membership would certainly be rewarding. John Richardson, who describes himself as Printer to the Lyceum Medicum, printed the Regulations, Laws, and List of Members of the Society on at least three occasions—1787, 1792, and 1794. Copies of the first two are in the library of the Royal College of Surgeons and that for 1794 is in the National Library of Medicine, Washington; the catalogue of the Surgeon General's Library records an edition of 1798, but this is al-

6. W. R. Le Fanu, "'Observables'" at the Royal College of Surgeons. 48. Hunter's prize medal, *Ann. roy. Coll. Surg. Engl.*, 1965, 36, 355.

most certainly an error for 1794. Richardson also printed the first two prize essays. In 1788 the subject was 'Properties of Pus' and the prize winner was Everard Home! In the following year James Moore, brother and biographer of the hero of Corunna, was awarded a prize for an essay on the 'Process of Nature in the Filling up of Cavities and Healing of Wounds.' It would not appear that subsequent essays were published though they were on such varied topics as 'Bile,' 'Perspiration,' 'Treatment of Compound Fractures,' and the 'Action of Medicines.'

What happened to John Richardson after 1794 is unknown, but if he were Samuel Richardson's nephew, he would be getting on in years. The Philanthropic Reform Buildings, St. George's Fields, where he lived, had been established in 1788 as a school for the children of convicted felons; amongst other trades, the boys learnt printing, and it may be that John Richardson taught them, but this is pure conjecture. However, it is to be hoped that this essay has illuminated some aspects of John Hunter's way of life and added a little to our knowledge of his writings.

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