

**HISTORY OF JAMES MITCHELL: A
BOY BORN BLIND AND DEAF,
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE
OPERATION, PERFORMED FOR
THE RECOVERY OF HIS SIGHT**

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History of James Mitchell: A Boy Born Blind and Deaf, with an Account of the operation, performed for the recovery of his sight by James Wardrop

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JAMES WARDROP

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HISTORY
OF
JAMES MITCHELL,
A BOY BORN BLIND AND DEAF,

WITH AN
ACCOUNT OF THE OPERATION
PERFORMED FOR THE RECOVERY OF HIS SIGHT.

BY
JAMES WARDROP, F. R. S. EDIN.

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1813.

TO
DUGALD STEWART, ESQ.

Esq. &c. &c.

Dear Sir,

The great interest you have taken, and the exertions you continue to make for the welfare of the unfortunate Youth whose History is now presented to the Public, will, I trust, be deemed a sufficient apology for the liberty I take in thus prefixing your Name.

The Memoir, when presented to you in manuscript having met with your approbation, I am induced to publish it in its original form. As your valuable Account of the Boy has been circulated only among your friends; and as there are some facts connected with the Operation, and

its immediate effects, which you have purposely omitted, I hope this Publication will not be deemed superfluous, and that it may, in some degree, promote the objects of your benevolent exertions.

With every sentiment of respect,

I remain,

Dear Sir,

your much obliged and

obedient servant,

JAMES WARDROP.

*Charles-street, St. James's-square,
December, 1812.*

THE
HISTORY, &c.

THE following history of a Boy, born Blind and Deaf, affords a most interesting, though lamentable, example of a defect in the organization of the human frame, which, as far as I know, has not yet been described; and lays open a field of curious and valuable philosophical investigation, which has not hitherto been much explored.

The boy, when brought to London, and put under my care, had passed the fourteenth year of his age. He was accompanied by his father,

a respectable clergyman in the north of Scotland, and by his sister; from whom, and from the observations I was enabled to make, the subsequent history has been collected.

He had the usual appearances of strength and good health, and his countenance was extremely pleasing, and indicated a considerable deal of intelligence.

On examining the state of his eyes, the pupil of each was observed to be obscured by a Cataract.

In the right eye the cataract was of a white colour and pearly lustre, and appeared to pervade the whole of the crystalline lens. The pupil, however, readily dilated or contracted, according to the different degrees of light to which it was exposed. The cataract in the left eye was not equally opaque; about one-third of it being dim and clouded, arising, as it appeared, from very

thin dusky webs crossing it in various directions, the rest being of an opaque white colour. The pupil of this eye did not, however, seem so susceptible of impressions from varieties in the intensity of light, as that of the other eye, nor did he employ this eye, so often as the other, to gratify his fondness for light.

I could discover no defect in the organization of his Ears.

Soon after his birth, his parents observed the cataracts in both eyes, and they also discovered, at a very early age, that he was Deaf, as no sounds appeared to excite his attention, and no noise seemed to awake him during sleep.

About the time of life when he was attempting to walk, he began to be attracted by bright and dazzling colours, and to derive pleasure from striking his teeth with sonorous bodies. He also appeared anxious to smell and feel those

substances which had become known to him through the medium of his other senses.

As he advanced in years, various circumstances concurred to prove, that neither the retina nor the auditory nerve were entirely insensible to the impressions of light and sound; and that, though he derived little information from these organs, he received from them a considerable degree of gratification.

He used to hold between his eye and luminous objects, such bodies as he had found to increase the quantity of light; and it was one of his chief amusements to concentrate the sun's rays, by means of pieces of glass, transparent pebbles, or similar substances which he held between his eye and the light, and turned about in various directions. There were other modes by which he was often in the habit of gratifying his desire of light. He would go to any out-house or room