

**A TREATISE ON  
AMAUROSIS AND  
AMAUROTIC AFFECTIONS**

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A treatise on amaurosis and amaurotic affections by Edward Octavius Hocken

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**EDWARD OCTAVIUS HOCKEN**

**A TREATISE ON  
AMAUROSIS AND  
AMAUROTIC AFFECTIONS**



Eye  
+

A. G. Wall

A

TREATISE ON AMAUROSIS

AND

AMAUROTIC AFFECTIONS.

BY EDWARD OCTAVIUS HOCKEN.

"But thou  
Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain  
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;  
So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs,  
Or dim suffusion veil'd."—MURRO.

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1842.

## PREFACE.

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In studying the diseases of the eye, my attention was especially called to those cases of imperfection, or loss of vision, usually designated Amaurosis, or amaurotic, but I found no separate treatise which embraced the consideration of all the varieties, causes, symptoms, and pathology of those affections, and a full, practical, and unexceptionable classification.

A work, in which the opinions of the best authors and most eminent men were collected and arranged, appeared to me a desideratum. Having for my own private use made some copious notes, with such intentions, I have ventured to publish this Treatise, the result, I trust, of correct observation and careful study, in which I have given those views which practical experience has led me to form, and have either confirmed them by the opinions of others, or quoted the contrary statements of authors upon the subject, classifying on full, but simple, and, I think, correct views.

I have selected the cases as being best adapted to illustrate that form of amaurosis under consideration.

In giving the opinions of others, I have thought it best to use the words of the author quoted, as a general rule, when permitted by the sense, and extent; my object being to collect such authorities as should render the volume as complete as possible, and to own my obligation to the authors quoted; nothing being easier than to give the opinion, without acknowledging the source. With these views, I submit this Treatise to the indulgence of a discerning profession.

15, *Featherstone Buildings,*  
*January, 1840.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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Diseases of the eye deservedly rank among the most important and interesting parts of pathology, and were it not so, their frequency, and the miserable results of disorganisation, would imperatively demand the medical man's strictest attention, both to their symptoms and treatment. As regards its interest, Mr. Cooper remarks that "were it not a subject disfigured by too many harsh and barbarous terms, I should say that it is one of the most inviting departments of surgical pathology and practice; one in which we may often actually see the changes of disease exactly as they occur, and estimate their nature with wonderful precision."<sup>1</sup>

But amaurosis, although rarely producing the disfigurement and apparent changes of organisation caused by the different species of ophthalmias, certainly is as important in its effects, and as melancholy in its results; for few privations bear comparison with loss of sight, and few diseases are so intractable in their progress, or certain in their results.

The study of amaurotic affections is by no means devoid of interest, as certainly it is not of importance, although it may present greater difficulties in its investigation than most of the other diseases of the eye, owing to the deep-seated nature of the parts affected, and the greater obscurity of all disturbances of the nervous functions. I cannot forbear from quoting Mr. Wardrop's opinion on this subject. He remarks that "the morbid alterations in the structure of the nervous system have hitherto been less successfully investigated than those of any of the other textures which compose the human body. These researches are also attended with peculiar difficulties, more especially in the retina; not only because the parts are extremely minute, and cannot be seen, like many of the other diseases in the living eye, but as very small deviations from the natural structure, which materially derange its functions,

<sup>1</sup> Cooper's First Lines of Surgery, p. 383, ed. 6th.

might escape even an attentive observer. Important, therefore, as the diseases of the nerve of vision undoubtedly are, much remains to be done by future observers in this part of pathology: and it is only by the collection of accurate histories and dissections that we can expect to be able to refer the various combination of symptoms which are observed in affections of this nerve to their respective morbid changes.<sup>1</sup>

The term amaurosis evidently includes a genus of morbid affections, not one invariable pathological condition induced by different exciting causes: thus, inflammation and want of nervous energy of the retina, will both produce imperfection or loss of vision; the one characterised by vascular derangement, tending to disorganising results, the other by loss of tone simply. In like manner various disorders and diseases of the optic nerve and brain frequently occasion amaurosis as a prominent symptom of their existence, and, indeed, sometimes as the most marked and distressing proof of their advance, to terminate, perhaps, in the slow but certain destruction of the ill-fated patient. The visual nervous structures are, moreover, sometimes simultaneously affected, the result of some local causes, or more frequently from general or constitutional disorder, where the general vascular system is either above or below par, and the nervous system permanently excited, or suffering from derangement, debility, and irritation; thus we have a class of amaurotic cases from debility, irritation, hyperæmia, and anæmia.

In the diagnosis of the various forms of amaurotic derangements which daily practical experience brings before us, how necessary is it to examine into their previous history and origin, their progress and early symptoms; to acquaint ourselves with their exciting causes, real or apparent, and the previous and present health, the constitutional peculiarities, derangements, and idiosyncrasies of the affected individual. As regards the present symptoms, we must take into consideration the form, size, and feel of the globe, its general healthy or diseased appearance, as well as the other objective appearances of the parts affected, which the practitioner can ascertain by the senses of sight and touch; as also a strict investigation into those defects of sensation, morbid appearances, and the various pains or uneasinesses of which the patient complains. Such are the means of forming a correct diagnosis, to detect the true pathological cause, and thus to employ those remedies which such a condition would indicate, without delay or loss of time; as the chance of success depends, in no slight degree, on the promptitude with which the symptoms are appropriately and actively combated.

Mr. Liston, in the preface to his "Elements of Surgery," most justly observes that "to treat surgical diseases as they ought to be treated, the practitioner must be thoroughly acquainted with the

<sup>1</sup> Wardrop's *Morbid Anatomy of the Human Eye*, vol. ii. 147, 8, 2d. ed.