The cause of rheumatic heart disease

Sir,

Dr William L Proudfit's recent review entitled "John Hunter: on heart disease" is a most interesting and valuable contribution. In it he mentions the question of whether Edward Jenner or Dr David Pitcairn should rightfully be credited with having initially associated valvar heart disease with precedent rheumatic fever. He suggests that Pitcairn's claim rests upon a footnote in the second edition of

Dr Matthew Baillie's textbook published in 1797 whereas Jenner was known to have spoken on the subject to the Gloucestershire Medical Society in 1789.

There is, however, stronger evidence than this for Pitcairn's claim. On 3 April 1810 William Charles Wells read a paper entitled "On rheumatism of the heart" to the Society for the Improvement of Medical and Chirurgical Knowledge. Wells was