

Opinion delivered by Dr Duncan sen., at a meeting of the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh, held on the 20th of March 1824, respecting a memorial and petition from Dr Hamilton, Professor of Midwifery, to the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town-Council of Edinburgh.

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OPINION delivered by Dr DUNCAN sen., at a Meeting of the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh, held on the 20th of March 1824, respecting a Memorial and Petition from Dr HAMILTON, Professor of Midwifery, to the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town-Council of Edinburgh.

MR PRINCIPAL,

WE are now met to decide upon a question, which I think is of great importance to the University of Edinburgh; and I shall beg leave briefly to state my opinion on that subject. That I may do this in as few words, and as explicitly, as I am able, I have put my sentiments in writing. That opinion, after having deliberately read all the long papers that now lie upon your table, I have endeavoured to form, without partiality or prejudice. I can at least say with confidence, that, in this question, I have no pecuniary interest to promote, no successful rival to oppose, no private enmity to gratify. But I consider myself as bound in duty to support the honour and interest of the University as long as I am able.

I need not tell the Senatus Academicus, that the same important question came under consideration about eight years ago. Dr Hamilton then applied to the University to be received, not as an Adjunct to the Faculty of Medicine, as Dr Young and his father had been for many years before him, but as a Member of that Faculty, exercising all the powers and privileges with regard to Graduation, which other Members of the Medical Faculty possess. He, at the same time, explicitly told us, that it was neither his object to claim any share of the Fees for Graduation, nor to take any share of the troublesome office of an Examiner. All he wanted

was, that no Student should be taken upon examination for a degree in Medicine, who had not previously attended his Lectures, and that an alteration should on that account be made in our Statuta Solennia.

The alteration which he proposed was at that time unanimously condemned by the Faculty of Medicine, of which Drs James Gregory and Daniel Rutherford, since dead, were then Members. Neither of them had ever attended any Lectures on Midwifery, either prior to graduation or afterwards, as they did not think it necessary that a Physician should be a Midwife.

To this determination of refusing Dr Hamilton's petition, the Faculty of Medicine were led, for the following Reasons :

1. Because they thought it would be highly disgraceful to the University of Edinburgh, that Candidates for the power to practise Medicine, should be obliged to qualify themselves for practising Midwifery, since many learned Colleges consider the practice of Medicine and of Midwifery by the same person as incompatible. At this moment, if a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London shall practise Midwifery, he forfeits fellowship.

2. Because, even supposing it were necessary for every Physician to study Midwifery, yet it would be the height of injustice to private teachers, both in Edinburgh and elsewhere, to require that our students should attend lectures on Midwifery *in hac aut in alia Academia*. Midwifery can only be properly taught, by witnessing actual deliveries, which must be entirely excluded from every University.

3. Because a practitioner in Midwifery cannot possibly discharge those duties which are required of every Examiner for a Degree, according to the present statutes of the University of Edinburgh. The Examiner must peremptorily sit as Juryman at an appointed diet. The Practitioner in Midwifery must peremptorily attend the call of every Lady at the period of delivery, and must patiently sit by her bedside for hours, nay, sometimes for days together, till the critical minute arrives.

For these reasons, which to me appear perfectly unanswerable, unless by subtleties and quibbles, the Medical Faculty were unanimously against granting the request of Dr Hamilton in the year 1815. And the Senatus Academicus, to the best of my recollection, unanimously adopted that opinion; for not one member supported Dr Hamilton's request. And although no formal decision is to be found recorded in our minutes, yet I for one, trusted that the question was completely set at rest. In place, therefore, of admiring Dr Hamilton's patience in waiting for so many years, I am astonished he has not rested contented with continuing to enjoy all the privileges which any of his predecessors ever enjoyed before him; and that he has again thought of reviving a claim which runs a very great risk of disturbing the harmony of the University.

He has, however, now adopted, what, in my opinion, is a highly culpable mode of accomplishing the object at which he formerly aimed. He has presented a Memorial and Petition to the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Town Council, requesting them to grant him a new Commission, conferring upon him privileges which are in express contradiction to the statutes of the University for conferring the degree of Doctor of Medicine. That Petition and Memorial the Town have transmitted to you, that they may be informed of your opinion respecting his request. These papers have led to long, and, in my apprehension, very improper discussions, in which Dr Hamilton and the Faculty of Medicine have shamefully dissected each others labours. Considering myself as an Emeritus Professor, and having entirely withdrawn from the duty of Examinations for Degrees in Medicine, I have, on the present occasion, taken no part in the discussions of the Faculty. But I shall now, in a very few words, state my opinion respecting Dr Hamilton's Memorial and Petition to the Town Council, and the answer which I think the University ought to return to the Honourable Patrons. That answer is the result entirely of my own deliberate consideration of the subject. I have formed no party to support it, and I have not even communicated it to a single colleague in the University.

In my opinion, Sir, Dr Hamilton's Memorial contains many assertions which are by no means founded in fact, and it contains many conclusions from these assertions which are highly erroneous. As sufficient evidence of this, I shall only read to you a single sentence respecting myself.

Of me he says, "*Students can derive from that individual Professor no additional knowledge which may enable them to cure diseases.*" I must own, Mr Principal, I think more favourably of my own Lectures. *That Professor* of whom Dr Hamilton speaks so contemptibly, has now been a Lecturer in Edinburgh for more than fifty years. And, in his humble opinion, during the whole of that long period, he has never delivered any Lecture which did not contain some useful information respecting the cure of diseases.

In my present course of Lectures, I must say much, even of the cure of diseases of women. In that course, among other branches of the Philosophy of the Human Body, I am necessarily led to treat of the peculiarities of females, and among others of menstruation. On this subject, from defending a favourite theory, which was highly applauded by Dr Hamilton's father, I have in general bestowed more time than I ought to have done. The pathology of this function necessarily leads me to treat of the causes and cure of the two most frequent and most important diseases of females, *Amennorrhæa* and *Menorrhagia*. And I trust that my hearers will be of a different opinion from Dr Hamilton, when he ventures to assert that they can derive from me no knowledge which may enable them to cure these diseases.

But, however contemptible an opinion Dr Hamilton may entertain of my Lectures on Diseases of Women, it is to me beyond measure astonishing that he should have dared to put in print such an unwarrantable assertion, as that the Lectures on the Institutions of Medicine at present delivered in the University of Edinburgh, afford no knowledge which may enable students to cure diseases. Dr Hamilton cannot be ignorant, that, in my course of Lectures, following the plan of Dr Cullen and other celebrated predecessors, I treat of three very important branches of medical science, Physiology, Pa-

thology, and Therapeutics. After being being far advanced in life, I was anxious to be relieved from some part of my labour, and the Town-Council allowed me in my old age the assistance of a coadjutor and successor recommended by myself. To my present coadjutor Dr Alison, I have assigned entirely the last of these branches, the Therapeutics, or Methodus Medendi, as it has been styled. The Therapeia generalis, Dr Hamilton well knows, is merely a different mode of teaching the cure of diseases from that which is followed in the Therapeia specialis, or Practice of Medicine, as it is in general denominated. In the Therapeia specialis, the lecturer proceeds from diseases to indications, and from indications to remedies. In the Therapeia generalis, the order is reversed. He proceeds from explaining the operation of classes of remedies, Purgatives, Sudorifics, and others, to the indications of cure which these classes are fitted to fulfil; and from indications he proceeds to the diseases, which they may be employed to cure. On this important and immediately practical part of our mutual course, while I have regularly given five lectures every week on the Philosophy of Medicine, Dr Alison has as regularly employed two lectures every week in teaching the cure of diseases. By this means, the students of the Institutions have had, for these three winters past, without any addition to the stated fee, a more extended course of the Theory of Medicine than was ever before delivered at the University of Edinburgh. And will any man venture to assert, that, from this course, students can derive no knowledge which may assist them in the cure of diseases?

Such, Mr Principal, are the unjust and injurious observations, with which Dr Hamilton, in a printed Memorial presented to the Patrons of the University, has chosen to stigmatise me. I shall only farther remark on his Memorial, that it is an equally false and scandalous libel upon some other Medical Professors, and that, in my opinion, it ought to be severely and publicly reprimanded by order of the Senatus Academicus.

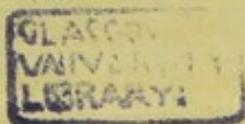
Of Dr Hamilton's petition to the Town-Council, I shall say very little. From his Patrons he asks a new commission,

containing two additions. The first is, *that he be declared a Professor of Medicine, as well as of Midwifery.* To this I have no other objection, but that the University have already virtually declared him a Professor of Medicine, and have constantly conjoined him with their medical branch. His other request is, “*to grant authority and power to him to examine candidates, and to do every thing requisite for the examination of Doctors of Medicine.*” This request, Sir, the Town-Council have not the shadow of power to grant. Every University in Scotland has the power of making its own laws respecting graduations. And, in all the four Scottish Universities, these laws are essentially different. In the University of Edinburgh, since I was connected with it, these laws have undergone very remarkable changes. The graduation of Dr Pultney in 1764, an apothecary from Northampton, who had never studied at any college, led to one material alteration. The graduation of Dr Leeds in 1766, who did not understand one word of Latin, led to another. And the graduation of Dr Hay, who obtained the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1809, when he was much under the age of manhood, led to a third very material change. In all these changes, Sir, the Senate of the University have acted by their own authority. They derive their powers of conferring degrees from a Royal Charter, ratified by act of Parliament; and in consequence of that act, they have uniformly enjoyed the same privileges which any free college within his Majesty’s realm does or may enjoy. When Dr Hamilton, therefore, presumes to apply to the Town-Council to alter our statutes, he is, in my opinion, guilty of a flagrant breach of duty, which ought not to pass unnoticed in our Senate.

With these sentiments, Mr Principal, I beg leave to propose, that the answer returned to the Town-Council should be in the following words.

“The Senatus Academicus have considered, with serious attention, the Memorial and Petition from Dr Hamilton, transmitted to them by the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town-Council of Edinburgh. They see no valid objection against the Town-Council granting one part of Dr Hamilton’s re-

quest, by issuing a new commission, declaring him a Professor of Medicine as well as Midwifery. But they beg leave to inform the Town-Council, that Dr Hamilton, as well as all his predecessors in office, has already been classed in the medical branch of the University, and has, in his turn with the other Professors of the Medical Branch, been repeatedly appointed a Member of the Library Committee for the purchase of medical books, and a Member of other Committees connected with the medical department of the University. They must also beg leave to inform the Town-Council, that if a new commission to Dr Hamilton shall attempt to confer on the Professor of Midwifery powers and privileges which are inconsistent with the Statutes of the University, for graduation in Divinity, Law, Medicine, or Arts, they cannot, without a flagrant violation of their duty to the University, receive Dr Hamilton as a Professor, with such a clause in his commission."



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