History of the Chair of Midwifery and the Diseases of Women and Children in the University of Edinburgh : an introductory lecture / by Alexander Russell Simpson.

HISTORY

OF THE

CHAIR OF MIDWIFERY AND THE DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

An Introductory Lecture.

BY

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HISTORY

OF

THE CHAIR OF MIDWIFERY, ETC., IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

GENTLEMEN,—Next year will see the tercentenary of our University worthily celebrated by a History of it from the lucid pen of our learned Principal. I take the opportunity of our meeting for the first time in this New Class-room to glance at the history of the Chair of Midwifery and the Diseases of Women and Children.

FOUNDATION OF THE CHAIR.

The 9th of February, 1726, is a notable day in the annals of medicine in our University. At the meeting that day of the Town Council, who were then the patrons of the University and the earnest promoters of its interests, three momentous lines of progress were opened up. Scarcely a year had passed since Monro had moved from the anatomical theatre of the Incorporation of Surgeons to the College buildings. On the day in question the patrons complied with the request of Drs Sinclair, Rutherford, Innes, and Plummer, to have the Theory and Practice of Physic and Chemistry taught in the University, and thus constituted the medical school and faculty. At that same sitting the University was for the first time authorized by the patrons to confer degrees in medicine. The third important transaction I must present to you by reading the Council minute:—

"The Council having considered the petition of Mr Joseph Gibson, chirurgeon in Edinburgh, with a declaration under the hands of four doctors of medicine, setting forth the usefulness and necessity of instituting a profession of midwifery; as also an extract of an act of the Incorporation of Chirurgeons, showing their approbation of the qualifications and capacity of Joseph Gibson, one of their number, for teaching the said art and science; they were fully convinced that it would be of great use and

advantage to institute this profession, and being well satisfied with the ability and capacity of the said Joseph Gibson to discharge that office, they were of opinion that the Council should nominate and appoint him to be Professor of Midwifery in this city and privileges, with power to him to profess and teach the said art, in as large an extent as it is taught in any city or place where this profession is already instituted; and that he should be vested with the same privileges and immunities that are known to appertain to a Professor of Midwifery in any other well-regulated city or place; but that it should be expressly provided that he should have no fee or salary from this city out of its patrimony or revenue on account of his said profession. And having likewise considered that many fatal consequences have happened to women in child-birth, and to their children, through the ignorance and unskilfulness of midwives in this country and city, who enter upon that difficult sphere at their own hand, without the least trial taken of their knowledge of the principles upon which they are to practise that art, and that it would be good service done to the community to put a stop to such a practice, in order to prevent such mischiefs in time coming; they were of opinion that it should be enacted by the Council, that no person hereafter should presume to enter on the practice of midwifery within this city and privileges (except such persons who have actually been bred to chirurgery, such may practise this art, upon passing the trials that warrants their practising of any other branch of chirurgery), till once they present to the magistrates a certificate, under the hands of at least one doctor and one surgeon, who are at the time members of the College of Physicians, or Incorporation of Chirurgeons of this city, bearing that they have so much of the knowledge of the grounds and principles of this art as warrants their entering upon the practice of it; whereupon a licence should be given them, signed by four of the magistrates at least, to practise midwifery. And that the said act might the more effectually reach the valuable ends proposed by it, they were further of opinion that it should be enacted that the whole midwives who are now in the exercise of that art in this city or privileges should be obliged, betwixt and the 1st of June next, to registrate their names in a book, to be kept by the magistrates' clerk, in the Council Chamber, for that purpose; and that the new intrants be recorded in the same book; to the end it may be known who shall for the future enter upon the practice of this art without the said licence; and that the contraveners of this act should be liable in such pains and penalties as by law may or can be inflicted upon ignorant and unskilful persons for practising an art where their ignorance and want of skill may be of such dangerous consequence to the lives of so many persons; and that they should be prosecuted for such transgression by the fiscal of court at the town's expense."

This document—a monument at once to the foresight and enterprise of Mr Thomas Gibson and the Corporation of Surgeons, who conceived the idea of founding such a Chair, and to the wisdom and thrift of the Town Council, which forthwith established without endowing it,—the document gives us an insight into the conditions under which this most important addition to the University equipment was inaugurated. We can see from it that the practice of midwifery was mainly in the hands of irresponsible women. We can see, further, that these women had had no regular training, and we can easily guess how often and how grievously they must have blundered at their delicate task. But we see also that the medical practitioners were waking up to recognise that midwifery is an integral and an important part of the medical profession, and they set before themselves the double duty of giving the female midwives proper instruction, and providing for the due training of medical students in this department.

Accoucheurs *versus* Midwives.

What was then to be seen in the small capital of this small kingdom was at the same time to be seen in the big, wide world. Through all the lengthened ages women had had the undivided, undisputed control of the process of child-birth. Surgeons and physicians, learned with the learning of their time, were caring for all the other sores and sicknesses of humanity. But when a woman had to endure the uttermost agony to which flesh is heir, when she had to go through a process that is natural, certainly, and commonly safe, but that is sometimes dangerous as a battle-field or deadly as a plague, then she was left to the questionable care of an untrained female. Individual midwives may have gathered much experience and acquired exceptional skill, but they did not commit their knowledge to writing, or hand it on to grow and develop with the progress of the ages. What obstetric literature existed was scattered in the pages of various authors, who devoted occasional chapters to the special diseases of women, to the disorders of pregnancy, or to the management of difficult labours; but natural labour still waited scientific treatment. The most important obstetrical writings of the earlier physicians and surgeons were collected first by Caspar Wolf in 1566, and subsequently in a more complete form by Israel Spach in a volume which he published at Strasburg in 1597 under the designation *Gynecciorum*.

It was at the very commencement of that sixteenth century, in the year 1513, that the first work exclusively devoted to midwifery was published in Latin by Eucharius Rhodion. It was translated into various languages for the benefit of the midwives, who thus for the first time had something like a text-book put at their disposal. It does not appear that they were in a hurry to avail themselves of it, and we can see with what a

doubtsome mind physicians set themselves to write or translate a work on midwifery, from the care with which Raynalde, for example, in his *Birthe of Mankynde* (which is really a translation of Rhodion), sets himself to meet the objections which will be made by many who "think it is not meete ne fitting such matters to be entreated of so plainly in our mother and vulgar language, to the dishonour (as they say) of womanhood and the derision of their own secrets, by the detection and discovery whereof, men it reading or hearing, shall be moved thereby, the more to abhorre and loath the company of women, every boy and knave reading them as openly as the tales of 'Robin Hood.'" But when men once began to write, when physicians and surgeons began definitely to furnish instruction for midwives, it is not difficult to comprehend how from that time there should also have begun a struggle as to whether men or women should have the supreme care of the parturient woman. Such a struggle is seen beginning already in the end of the sixteenth century, and going on until it becomes a furious fight in the end of the seventeenth and earlier half of last century. During it much was written and still more said as to the impropriety and worse of women allowing themselves to be attended in their confinements by Men-Midwives, as they were called in the vernacular, or Accoucheurs, according to the French designation. A single sentence from one of the pamphlets on that side of the question will be enough to give you an impression of their style of literature:—"The men have but lately come into fashion. In praise of Scotland and Ireland be it spoken, the women of these countries are still too modest to employ them. What is the consequence? Adulteries happen very seldom in these countries; and every farm-house swarms with strong, healthy, well-limbed children."

Ere women became familiarized with the idea of being attended by accoucheurs, such a scene as this (cited by Dr Aveling in his interesting *History of English Midwives*) from the practice of Dr Percival Willughby may often have occurred. Dr Willughby, whose daughter was an expert midwife, says:—"In Middlesex, anno 1685, my daughter, with my assistance, delivered Sir Tennebs Evank's lady of a living daughter. All the morning my daughter was much troubled, and told me that shee feared that ye birth would come by ye buttocks. About seven o'clock that night labour approached. At my daughter's request, unknown to the lady, I crept into the chamber upon my hands and knees, and returned, and it was not perceived by ye lady. My daughter followed me, and I being deceived through hast to go away, said that it was ye head, but she affirmed the contrary; however, if it should prove ye buttocks, that shee knew how to deliver her. Her husband's great Oliverian power, with some rash expressions that he uttered, flowing too unhandsomely from his mouth, dismayed my daughter. She could not be quieted until I crept privately again the second

time into ye chamber, and then I found her words true. I willed her to bring down a foot, the which shee soon did, but being much disquieted with fear of ensuing danger, shee prayed mee to carry on the rest of the work."

Thus for a time the practice was partly divided between the doctors and the nurses. The books on midwifery, which at first were meant for the guidance of women, began to address themselves also to men. Thus Dionis asks and answers the question, What are the qualifications of an accoucheur? concluding his answer with the following:—"In a word, he must show himself a perfect honest man, who squares all his actions by the Word of God. He must therefore be virtuous, of a sweet temper, affable, full of compassion, and always contented with any handsome or moderate fee that is given him." Then he begins his description of the necessary qualifications of a midwife thus:—"Midwives ought not only to have all the good qualities required in men-midwives, but must also leave off several vices proper to their sex and profession."

We sometimes find the two groups of aspirants not only reading the same books, but sitting in the same class-room. Here is the account given by Mr Tolver, a London man-midwife, who visited Paris after the middle of last century, of the course of lectures given by a Mr Payen:—"This professor has rose into notice, rather through intrigue than merit, and was set up in opposition to Mr Levret. The lectures he reads were penned by a very eminent physician and man-midwife, expressly for that purpose. . . . Each course continues about three or four months; and as the expence is only one guinea, the pupils of both sexes are seldom less than threescore. Here barbers, women, and regulars promiscuously assemble, and are present together upon all occasions. A circumstance very disgusting to the gentleman, and frequently repugnant to the delicacy of a Briton."

The struggle was at its height when our far-seeing and enterprising Mr Thomas Gibson and the Corporation of Surgeons, with the aid of our wise and thrifty Provost Drummond and his town councillors, set up their Chair of Midwifery in this University. But the men were already beginning to get the best of it, and by the time the Chair got into full working order they had triumphed along all the line.

Various reasons have been adduced in explanation of the transference of obstetric practice to the male from the female sex. Three only are worthy of consideration. By some, such as Hamilton in his *History of Medicine*, it has been attributed to a caprice of fashion—an example supposed to have been first set in high circles in Paris having come to be in this, as in other matters, the *mode* for all the world. The author mainly relied on by the upholders of this theory is John Astruc, who died in 1766 in his 82nd year. This remarkable man, who practised first at Montpellier and afterwards at Paris, where he was surgeon to

the king of France, was the author of many different works His book on Venereal Diseases was long a standard work on that subject; while by pointing out the distinction between the Elohistic and Jehovistic passages in the Old Testament, he opened up a path for theologians, along which the higher critics of our day have travelled to a length that would greatly have astonished him. Among his other volumes we have a set of *Lectures on Midwifery*, which he tells us were prepared for the sages-femmes, and in which we find the following history :—

"It is certain, at least, that Maria Theresa, wife of Louis XIV., king of France, employed women only in her labours; and the example of the queen determined the conduct of the princesses and court ladies, and one after another of the ladies in the city. I have been assured that the epocha of surgeons being employed does not go farther back than the first lying-in of Madam De la Valiere in 1663. As she desired it might be kept a profound secret, she sent for Julian Clement, a surgeon of reputation. He was conducted with the greatest secrecy into an house where Madam De la Valiere was, with her face covered with a hood, and where, it is pretended, the king was concealed in the curtains of the bed. She had a good time, and was delivered at Paris, the 27th of December 1663, of a boy, who was christened Louis of Bourbon, and died the 15th of July 1668, without having been legitimated."

Fashion anywhere is powerful: Parisian fashion is proverbial. But, *secondly*, I do not doubt that Dr Aveling is nearer the mark in stating that the discovery of the midwifery forceps was a chief cause in determining the further course of midwifery practice. Up till the time that the Chamberlens invented this most valuable of our life-saving apparatus, the introduction of a doctor into a lying-in room was always an intimation to the lying-in woman that she was in the uttermost danger. The hour of her possible delivery, but her more probable death, had come. She was very likely *in articulo* before the man was summoned; or if still there was hope for her, there was none for her infant. If it was not already dead, it must now be destroyed, and she must be sorely damaged by implements of dread. But when she began to find that doctors could deliver her safely of a living child when the natural powers had failed, her terrors were allayed, and more and more she got to seek as her attendant the person on whom she could most confidently lean in all emergencies.

Thirdly, Professor Goodell points out that a yet more powerful factor in the transition was at work in the growing power of the printing-press. I have hinted already that the age-long reign of female midwifery had been barren of any literary product. Even after text-books began to be written for them by medical men, and they began to feel the pressure of competition in their profession on the part of the sterner sex, and to commit to writing something of their experience, they produced no work of endur-

ing value or that served to further the progress of midwifery. Perhaps the most important is the book of Louise Bourgeois, *dite* Boursier, from the 1642 edition of which *The Compleat Midwife,* for a time a favourite English text-book, is largely a translation. This Louise has not wanted a genial *sacer vates* in these days, inasmuch as Professor Goodell has described her and her work in a lecture full of humour and erudition. But her work throws no new light on the process of parturition; and though in one of her chapters she describes her treatment of cases of placenta prævia as if the idea of rescuing patients by turning and extraction of the child had originated with herself, she may well have learnt it from her husband, who was a surgeon, and had for twenty years been an inmate with Ambrose Paré, who was the first to introduce into practice the operation of version. Whilst the midwives thus failed to advance with the progress of their time, the mention of the name of Paré calls up the memory of Guillemeau and Mauriceau, and a great succession of illustrious surgeons and physicians, who wrote treatises on midwifery. The enlightenment following the widened use of the press made it increasingly clear that the men who had the scientific training were the parties from whom competent text-books should proceed; and that they might fit themselves duly for such work, it became increasingly needful that they should have the opportunity of observing labour in all its conditions. As Goodell puts it, "In proportion as people grew wiser by reading books and by having them to read, the ignorance of midwives became more and more manifest. The physician developed with the times, the midwife did not. . . . The battle between knowledge and ignorance is never a drawn one; either Christian must die or Apollyon give way."

The First Obstetric Chair.

This fight between light and darkness on the plain of Obstetrics had been going on, as we have seen, for more than a century, and the dawn was already visible, when our College and our Council concerted together to institute a chair which should help to banish the darkness and bring in the day. The more I look at the Council minute which I have read, the more I am disposed to admire the conjoint work of our two corporations. They institute a new professorship. But I am inclined to think that they also establish a precedent. They say, indeed, that the new professor is to be "vested with the same privileges and immunities that are known to appertain to a professor of midwifery in any other well-regulated city or place;" but when we look at the title-pages of the great obstetric works of the time, we do not find that any of the authors had the position of professors of midwifery. In the varies cities and universities where students or nurses were being trained, the tuition in midwifery was conducted by independent obstetricians, sometimes physicians, sometimes

surgeons, or formed part of the instruction given by the incumbents of other chairs.

In London—always anomalous in its provision for medical instruction—there was room, thirteen years later, for the advent of the Scottish country doctor who migrated from Lanark to the great metropolis, and quickly gathered crowds of eager students to the lectures which he gave in his own house (perhaps in Wardour Street, Soho), with its paper lantern over the door, on which was written, "Midwifery taught here for five shillings." For though his name is almost a synonym for the glory of British midwifery, William Smellie was only a private practitioner.

In Paris his great contemporary, Levret, wrought and taught as one of the medical officers of the Hôtel Dieu, and with the title of accoucheur to the Dauphiness. Great surgeons and physicians, like Astruc, Dionis, Deleurye, might give courses of lectures on obstetrics, but a professorship of midwifery was not instituted in the University of Paris till a century after our patrons had set their chair in the University of Edinburgh.

It was fitting that Strasburg—first with the printing-press—should be first on the Continent with a professorship of midwifery, dating, according to Kilian, from 1728. Strasburg was then a French city; and the man who was to occupy the first distinctively obstetric chair in Germany was only born there in May 1726, the year in which the Edinburgh chair was instituted. It was thus not till another generation that Roederer began his brilliant and too brief career in Göttingen.

If we turn to Holland, rich in universities, we note a work appearing in the beginning of last century that might almost be called epoch-making; but the author of it, Henry Deventer, was no professor. He seems to have been a general practitioner at the Hague, with a good scientific training, observant and thoughtful, pious and self-denying, and blessed withal with a helpmeet who was herself an accomplished midwife. In the universities, midwifery, as far as it was taught at all, seems to have been taken up by whatever professor had most liking for the subject as part of his course. In the University of Amsterdam it was taught one month per annum by Ruysch, Professor of Anatomy, who was famous for having collected two anatomical museums. When the first of them was bought by Peter the Great, to be carried to St Petersburg, he set himself to provide a second for his own university.

As for Belgium, Palfyn, who first gave forceps to the world, was "Demonstrateur en Chirurgie" at Ghent.

In Italy we find, from Corradi's *Obstetricia in Italia*, that Victor Amadeus II. of Piedmont started the first school for teaching in Turin in 1728, by setting apart a ward in the San Giovanni Hospital for lying-in women, where midwives should have practical instruction. At Bologna, after the model of which some of our Scottish universities were established, the first obstetrical professor was Gian-Antonio Galli, who in 1717 was appointed professor of

surgery; and as he had for some time taught midwifery privately, he was nominated by Pope Benedict XIV. professor of midwifery in 1757. He was succeeded in his chair by the ill-fated Galvani, illustrious in quite other spheres than that of obstetrics.

It was therefore a bold step as well as a great one which the patrons took when, on the 9th February 1726, they instituted a profession in midwifery, and appointed Mr Joseph Gibson to be the city professor of midwifery, in this University. It was a peculiarly courageous venture in a country regarding which Bower concurs with the pamphleteer I have quoted in the statement that "the practice of midwifery in Scotland was completely engrossed by females," and in which, writing in 1817, he could add, "The profession of an accoucheur was esteemed, little more than thirty years ago, very unbecoming for a gentleman; and so strong was the current of vulgar prejudice against those who practised it, that it was only in the most extreme cases, and, in general, when they could be of little or no service, that modest women would permit them to be called in for advice or assistance."

The First Professor of Midwifery.

It would have been interesting to have known more than we do of Mr Joseph Gibson, who was probably the prime mover in the whole transaction, and who was certainly the first Professor of Midwifery in the United Kingdom, if he was not indeed the first to fill an obstetric chair in any University. The most distinct traces of him are found in the *Medical Essays and Observations* published by a Society in Edinburgh, to which he furnished three communications. In these he is described as "Mr Joseph Gibson, *surgeon at Leith, member of the Society of Chirurgeon-Apothecaries in Edinburgh, and city-professor of midwifery.*" His qualification, therefore, corresponds to that of the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, and his sphere of practice was not in this city, but in Leith, where he continued till his death in 1739, which is chronicled in the obituary of the *Scots Magazine*. According to Bower, his son had long the first business in Leith as a surgeon, and was in practice there till what he calls a recent period.

His contributions to the *Medical Essays* cannot be said to be the productions of a master mind. The most important of them discusses the question of the mode of nutrition of the fœtus in utero. Professor Monro and he have each an essay on the subject, that of Gibson having been called out by some facts which Monro had communicated to Cheselden for his work on surgery, tending to disprove the idea that the fœtus was nourished by the mouth. In Monro's reply he fairly describes the paper of the colleague whom he calls "my ingenious, valuable friend Mr Gibson," when he says, "He has given a learned critical account of the different opinions concerning the nourishment of fœtuses," and "after examining the arguments made use of for proving their nourishment to be conveyed by the navel only, he concludes them

to be insufficient, and supports the doctrine of the aliment being received by both the mouth and navel." "There is no great anxiety on my part," says Monro, "to bring people, at any rate, into my way of thinking; and I dare promise on Mr Gibson's behalf that he will not value a victory in point of argument near so much as he would be satisfied to see the truth ascertained by our labours, tho' judgment should be given against him." It is to be hoped that Gibson was convinced. Certainly Monro was right. He tells how Mr Gibson, along with his colleague Dr Sinclair, helped in a mercurial injection experiment in a newly killed bitch; and Gibson, if not satisfied, is silent. His two other communications show him to be a good observer and operator, but they do not belong to the domain of obstetrics. A sentence in one of these papers, however, throws incidental light on the friendly relation in which he stood to other members of the Senatus, when he tells that he was assisted at a post-mortem examination by "Dr James Crawfurd, late Professor of Hebrew and Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, whose universal literature and consummate medical knowledge, joined to all those amiable qualifications which made up the beautiful character of a good man and sincere friend, must make all who had the happiness to know him best, to bemoan with me their own private, and regret the public loss of him."

It is of moment here, however, to note that Mr Gibson bears always the title "city-professor" or "town's professor," significant of the circumstance that, whilst the first Professor of Midwifery had a right to teach, he had no place in the Senate, and was not constituted a member of the Medical Faculty of the University.

As to who were his pupils, and where and what he taught, we have no information. We can follow him in fancy making his way up the Leith Walk, and descending the north bank of the ravine that is now spanned by the North Bridge. For that George Drummond, who did so much and so well for Edinburgh and its institutions during the seven periods in which he wore the Provost's chain, and who must have signed Mr Joseph Gibson's commission and, in so doing, cast up a highway by which midwifery might pass across the gulf of prejudice from the old world of barren routine to the new world of fruitful research,—that great provost did not commence the bridge which now joins the old town and the new till 1763. So Professor Gibson would have to find his way through the ravine, somewhere near the Physic Gardens, and up Leith Wynd, to gain the Canongate. But further we cannot trace him. It is always taken for granted that he lectured only to women; but where they gathered, and what instruction he gave, is all unknown. He died, I have said, in 1739.

As I look over the pages of the *Medical Essays* to which I have referred, I see papers by a professor of medicine in the University of St Andrews which make me wonder that a name that afterwards became famous in connexion with this Chair did not become

associated with it a century sooner. This Dr Thomas Simpson, who spells his name indifferently with an *i* or a *y*, with a *p* or without it, contributes a series of essays on subjects connected with midwifery. There is one on "The Placenta, the two Cavities of the Uterus, and Ruysch's Muscles in Fundo Uteri," in which he speaks of the uterus as "that obscure though efficacious viscus;" another on a "Prolapsus Pessary;" another on a "Ring-Scalpel for Assisting the Delivery of Women in Childbirth," and so on, which make it clear that he would have been an able teacher of obstetrics. But he may have been already dead; or perhaps to be translated from St Andrews to Edinburgh was not deemed so desirable then as now.

The Successive Edinburgh Professors.

Professor Gibson's successor was Mr Robert Smith. Elected on the 14th December of the same year, he received a commission which, as Bower notes, was more ample than that of his predecessor, as it constituted him a member of the Senatus Academicus. "He was consequently," says Bower, "the first who was chosen Professor of Midwifery in the city's College with power to him to profess and teach the said art in the said College, and within the city, liberties, and privileges thereof, on as large an extent as it is taught in any city or place where this profession is instituted, or as the said Joseph Gibson did profess and teach the same, and with the same privileges and immunities which the other professors in the said College do enjoy, or that are known to appertain to a professor of midwifery in any other well-regulated city or place."

This Mr Robert Smith is the haziest figure who rises on our horizon in this historic survey. Though not yet admitted as a member of the Medical Faculty, he has the full status of a member of the Senatus; and it is taken for granted that, like Professor Gibson, he duly taught midwifery to classes of nurses. But if he ever wrote anything, the product of his pen has perished with other perishable things. He did his work in troublous times. The Hanoverian dynasty was settling itself heavily and clumsily on the throne of the United Kingdom, to the great grief of Jacobite patriots; and the streets of the city were appropriated now by Highland caterans and anon by Cumberland's butchers. These were trying years for older chairs than the young obstetric institution. The attendance on anatomy once fell as low as from 150 to 76. The man must have had some good stuff in him who kept alight the torch that was put into his hand, and carried it through a tempestuous epoch on to a calmer age. Had he not fulfilled the duties of the chair to some good purpose, there would have been no chair to leave to a more fortunate successor.

After an incumbency of seventeen years, Professor Smith resigned, and on the 18th February, 1756, Dr Thomas Young was elected to the vacant chair. Here we come in sight of a more energetic personality. No history of him is given previous to his appointment

to the post, but we see at once that he had a due appreciation of its duties and was prepared to fulfil them with intelligence and zeal. The only printed essay he seems to have left is his graduation thesis, of date 1776. He had been thus twenty years in the professorial chair before he took the degree of M.D., having had, like his predecessors, at the time of his appointment, simply the qualification of the College of Surgeons. In the thesis, printed, as was then the custom, in Latin, *De Lacte,* there are no observations of special value. Its chief interest lies in the collection from various sources of the cure of many different kinds of disease effected by the use of milk, so that in reading it one gets the impression that milk is the sovereign remedy for every ailment from diarrhœa to mercurio-syphilitic ulcerations. Several copies of manuscript notes of his lectures, sometimes in one, sometimes in two or three volumes, are extant. Three of these are in my possession, and they bear evidence to his wide acquaintance with the literature of his subject, and his excellent power of observation and exposition.

But the best evidence of his high capacity is found in the manner in which he used his opportunities of teaching. His successor probably exaggerates the importance of his work when he describes him as the first to teach midwives in Scotland; for there is little room to doubt that his predecessors had already, in some fashion, imparted instruction. Still Professor Young must have made some quite distinct advance on both their methods ere Professor Hamilton could say, in speaking of the lessened frequency of inversion of the uterus subsequently to labour,—"This, among many other happy consequences, has been the effect of the public instruction of midwives, a measure introduced into Scotland by the late Dr Young. Before his time any woman of intrepidity and address who chose to practise midwifery found employment; and for a while it required all his industry and professional talents to show the folly of trusting the delivery of women to such persons. Even they who pretended to the sacred name of philosophers joined in the prejudice. Dame Nature, they said, is the proper midwife, and nobody can be better qualified to attend to her dictates than Dame Ignorance. Dr Young might with great facility, by publishing a few of the horrible blunders committed by the midwives resident in Edinburgh when he began practice, recorded in his note-book (which is still in existence), have offered many most powerful arguments against such opinions, but he preferred the more philanthropic and dignified method of showing by its effects the utility of his plan. Such has been the public conviction on this subject, that in the present day there is scarcely a parish of Scotland the midwife of which has not been regularly taught.[1]

[1] In a letter to Sir Wm. Garrow, His Majesty's attorney-general, Prof. J. Hamilton says, "In no other part of Europe except Great Britain, are midwives allowed to practise without being duly instructed. In Scotland public opinion has long ago had the effect of law in this respect, and there are very few county

If the difficulty of instructing women to act as midwives, and Dr Young's disinterestedness in that task were universally known, a just tribute might be paid to his memory."

In one direction it is certain that Dr Young did pioneer work, seeing that he was the first to give regular courses of instruction to medical students; and the energy and enlightenment with which he set about his task is shown by the circumstance that he at once made efforts to provide for clinical instruction in midwifery. It is recorded (Bower) that, with the view of obtaining material for practical tuition, "he gave public notice that patients should be delivered at their own house free of expense, and, were it necessary, should also be supplied with proper medicines."

We find it stated, moreover, in the authorized history of the Royal Infirmary, that in the year of his appointment, "a ward in the attic story of the hospital, by the permission of the managers, but at Dr Young's expense, was fitted up for four lying-in women, or as many more as Dr Young could accommodate, each exceeding the number four paying sixpence per day to the house."

"After Dr Young had successfully taught the class for twenty-four years, he found it necessary to procure the assistance of a colleague. He therefore resigned his office upon the 25th of October, 1780, and the patrons, upon the subsequent 15th of November, elected him and Dr Alexander Hamilton conjunct professors of midwifery."—(Bower.) For three years Dr Young and Dr Hamilton worked the Chair as conjoint professors, giving alternately three courses of instruction annually to male and female pupils, till, on the death of Dr Young, Hamilton was left the sole occupant of the Chair.

This new professor, Alexander Hamilton, is the first of the Edinburgh professors of midwifery whose name is known to the outside world, so that Siebold, in his *Versuch einer Geschichte der Geburtshülfe,* begins his reference to the history of obstetrics in Edinburgh with the mention of his name as that of "an active man who has done good service for the promotion of this department." Five years before his appointment to the professorship he had published a text-book, *Elements of the Practice of Midwifery,* and at later periods more complete treatises on midwifery and the management of female complaints, which were translated into German. Besides publishing individual cases and superintending an edition of Smellie's plates, he wrote a series of letters to Dr Osborne of London, controverting the dangerous doctrines of that obstetrician, which were translated into German by C. F. Michaelis. One of Kay's portraits gives us what I do not doubt is a correct impression of this really remarkable man. Wearing the wig and shovel hat, the long coat, knee breeches and

parishes in which a regularly educated midwife is not established. Since the year 1780, above a thousand such women have been taught by the Professor of Midwifery in Edinburgh, and a great many have also been instructed at Glasgow and at Aberdeen" (P. 14).

buckle shoes of the period, we see the active little man trotting along, swinging freely the dainty hands with ruffles round the wrists. He is of short stature, for he looks no taller than one of the ladies whom the artist has introduced with the projected muff and the exaggeratedly upright bearing of a pregnant female. When we look at his face more closely we are impressed with the power of the large lower jaw; and the compressed lips seem to bespeak the determined character of the man who did so much to advance the science and art of obstetrics, to promote the instruction and elevate the status of obstetricians, and to extend the reputation of the University of Edinburgh as a medical school.

The son of a medical practitioner at Fordoun, who had been a surgeon in the army during Queen Anne's wars, he came to Edinburgh about the year 1758 as assistant to a surgeon then in extensive practice, of the name of John Straiton, and on that gentleman's death in 1762 he became a member of the College of Surgeons, and settled in the city. The activity of his disposition may be traced in the circumstance that he had not been long a member when he was elected deacon of the Incorporation, thus becoming a member of the Town Council; and about the same time he was chosen convener of the trades. At a later period he obtained the degree in medicine of the University of St Andrews, and at a still later period he was admitted a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. This latter position was not obtained without a struggle, for the physicians were still disposed to look down on their brethren who engaged in the practice of midwifery, and it needed all the eloquence of Professor Gregory to persuade them to admit a group of practitioners who have since then furnished to that College a full proportion of its presidents.

In the year 1792 a *Guide for Gentlemen Studying Medicine at the University of Edinburgh, by J. Johnson, Esq.*, was published, which gave rise to fierce controversy and threatenings of legal proceedings between Professor Gregory and Professor Hamilton and his son James, the latter of whom was supposed to have written or inspired it. It was withdrawn from circulation, but a copy survives in the valuable library of the Royal Medical Society. It tells us: "Dr Hamilton divides his course into four parts. In the first he explains every circumstance in the state of women before delivery with which the practitioner ought to be acquainted; in the second he describes the treatment during child-bearing of all the various cases which can occur; in the third he describes the management of lying-in-women; and in the fourth part he exhibits a most complete view of the diseases of children in early infancy." . . . "The practice of midwifery is acquired in the lying-in ward of the Royal Infirmary; but, as it is on a very small scale (containing only six patients at a time), Dr Hamilton engages to furnish his pupils with private deliveries if they are very anxious to see much practice."

The author of this pamphlet goes on to express surprise that hitherto there has been no lying-in hospital in Edinburgh, but understands that the Professor of Midwifery is about to bring forward proposals for the foundation of such an institution.

The lying-in hospital to which the *Guide* makes reference was established in 1791 mainly through the energy and influence of Professor Hamilton, who felt the inadequacy of the limited accommodation grudgingly afforded in the Royal Infirmary. It was established under the patronage of the magistrates of the city, with the Lord Provost as president, and the Professor of Midwifery as ordinary physician. For nearly a century it has held an honourable position among the charitable and educational institutions of Edinburgh as a place of refuge and relief to multitudes of suffering women, and of instruction to many generations of nurses and students of medicine.

By the time that Professor Hamilton set himself to the establishment of this important institution, he had trained his son James, born in 1767, to be his assistant. On the 25th December, 1798, he was formally allowed by the patrons to have the assistance of his son in the chair. On the 26th March, 1800, he resigned, and on the 9th April following his son was appointed his successor. He enjoyed his retirement only for two years, dying at Blandfield House on the 23rd May, 1802, in the 64th year of his age.

The son and successor was worthy of the father and predecessor. In 1792, Professor Duncan could speak of Dr James Hamilton as "an ingenious young friend, whose industry and abilities are already so well known, and have been demonstrated on so many occasions, even at his early period of life, that his reputation can derive no addition from the mention of his name on the present occasion." He enjoyed the advantage of a very complete general and medical training, was a good classical scholar, and gave evidence of the width of his medical sympathies by publishing a translation of a volume of Morgagni's *Seats and Causes of Disease.* Midwifery, however, was his passion, for besides beginning to assist his father with his lectures when he was only twenty-one years of age, he aided him in the preparation of his various works, so that in some of the volumes we hardly know what is the father's and what the son's. His own most important production was his *Practical Observations*, published in 1836, which is referred to in the *British and Foreign Medical Review* as "a work embodying the result of an experience extending to upwards of fifty years, and comprehending a practice the most extensive, perhaps, that was ever enjoyed by any single practitioner in this department of medicine" (Vol. ix., 1840, 292).

Like his father he was a man of war, and his longest and keenest battle was for the attainment of an object which his father knew to be desirable, but deemed it hopeless to attempt to gain. It amazes us to think that there ever could have been any question as to the desirability of subjecting candidates for a qualification

for practice to an examination in midwifery as well as in chemistry and anatomy, not to say medicine and surgery. Yet it was for this that the Hamiltons had to contend. In 1815 James Hamilton made his first attempt to be admitted as a member of the Medical Faculty, and not till fifteen years later was he accorded a place where common sense would have put him at the first. Long after the Professor had obtained a seat in the Faculty and had acquired a right to examine students on the subjects which he taught, he had to furnish them with a separate diploma or license in midwifery distinct from the graduation diploma. He was an enthusiast in his work, and we can believe it true what is said regarding him: "To an intimate knowledge of his subject was added an animated, agreeable, and interesting mode of imparting that knowledge to others, qualities which combined to render him perhaps the most attractive and successful professor of his day."

He died November 14th, 1839, full of years and honour; and the subject being by this time taught as a regular part of the winter course, the class was conducted for that session by his favourite pupil Dr Moir, whom three successive occupants of the chair have had the happiness to count among their choicest friends.

In setting before you such presentment as I have been able to make of these earlier Professors of Midwifery, it has needed the light of historical research to call them up from the darkness of the past, for the name even of the latest and greatest of them has fallen from the pages of our midwifery text-books, and is all unknown to modern gynecology. There remains but to mention one more name, which shines in its own light, and will be luminous for ever.

When James Hamilton was growing old, new times were passing over every sphere of thought and action, stirring every science to new research and every art to new achievement. In no department of medicine was there a more distinct transition from an old era to a new than in that which the patrons in 1840 appointed James Young Simpson to profess; and of the many men who took their part in shaping the features of the modern time no one had a larger or worthier share than he. In Midwifery good work had but recently been done, notably by Nægele and his compatriots, in developing the science. Simpson assimilated the new doctrines, and knew how to enforce, extend, and illustrate them. In all the operative procedures that the exigencies of midwifery demand he found much to improve, and on many of them he effected changes of abiding value, so that some of the most frequently employed instruments and forms of instrument are called by his name. Above all, he made the epoch memorable by robbing the lying-in room of its anguish, through the introduction, first of ether, which the surgeons were already using, and then of chloroform, the anæsthetic powers of which he was the first to prove and promulgate.

As for Gynecology, an entire transformation had to be accom-

plished; and this was its Augustan age. Among the many who had a hand in taking down the old and building up the new, surely it is of the man who introduced the sound, the sponge-tent, the exploring-needle, and the anæsthetic into the sphere of gynecological diagnosis, and who at the same time suggested new and fruitful modes of treating the diseased conditions then first recognised—of him, if of any, may it be said, "He found Rome brick, and he left it marble."

Were it as near the beginning of the hour as it is near the close, I might attempt to sketch for you his life and work. Enough now to say that he was born on the 7th of June 1811, and was elected to the chair on the 4th of February 1840. For thirty years he lectured with an enthusiasm the contagion of which is evidenced by the numbers of young men whom he stirred to the pursuit of his branch of study. Not only in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen are his pupils now teaching midwifery; but seven out of eighteen of the present professors and lecturers on the subject in England were once members of his class. He died on the 6th of May 1870, and on the 13th Edinburgh ceased her business for a time whilst she carried him to his grave in Warriston.

So much for the past of the Chair. A paragraph or two will suffice for

The Present and the Future.

As early as 1857 tutorial instruction at the lecture hour on Saturdays began to be imparted by Simpson's private assistants. The allowance for a class tutor from the funds of the University has enabled his successor to develop the system of tutorial instruction; and with the able help of Dr Halliday Croom, Dr Berry Hart, and Dr A. H. Barbour, the classes have been so arranged that every student has now the opportunity of being drilled in the nature and use of the various obstetrical and gynecological operations and appliances.

Apart from the development of the tutorial system, two innovations of great importance have been introduced with the enlightened sanction of the University authorities. A supplementary summer course has been established, which gives opportunity for fuller technical instruction in operative midwifery and gynecology. That is the one innovation. The other is that students of this University have now provided for them the privilege of obtaining clinical instruction in the diseases of women, as an integral part of their course of clinical medicine, in the Royal Infirmary; the Professor of Midwifery and the Diseases of Women giving every sixth clinical lecture and taking, in each session, the sixth part of the bedside instruction.

What further improvement may arise in connexion with the teaching of the subjects here professed must come through the evolution of another Chair. There is already ample material to occupy the energies of two professors in the rapidly advancing

Midwifery and Gynecology which are becoming more distinctly differentiated every day. Edinburgh was the school which had the honour to have the first Professor of Midwifery; let us hope that it will also have the proud pre-eminence of being among the foremost to possess a Chair of Gynecology.

One thing more and I have done. The unendowed professor has the happiness to teach a singularly well-endowed class. Two excellent ladies have each invested £1000 to found a scholarship, which may be won by competition here. My venerable friend Mrs James Buchanan, 49 Moray Place, who first endowed and afterwards furnished the "Buchanan" Ward in the Royal Infirmary, where you will receive clinical instruction in gynecology, and who, for many years past, has taken a warm interest in the patients there, is the founder of the Buchanan Scholarship. It is open to all the students of this class, and is awarded to the candidate who shows the highest proficiency in class competitions and graduation examination, and who has kept the best record of his cases in the "Buchanan" Ward. It is thus to be regarded as distinctively a scholarship in gynecology; and Mrs Buchanan has already had the satisfaction twice of greeting Buchanan scholars in the persons of Mr James Hewetson, M.B., and Mr David Smart, M.B. The James Scott Scholarship in midwifery is a witness of the filial affection of Mrs Thomson, Rosalee, a lady well known and esteemed in Hawick for her varied and virtuous activities, who founds the scholarship in memory of her father, the late James Scott, Esq., of Allanshaws. It is more distinctively a scholarship in midwifery, and will be awarded to the candidate who, besides showing general proficiency in his class competitions and graduation examination, presents the best record of the cases he has attended in his midwifery practice, and the preference will be given to those who have taken their cases in connexion with the Royal Maternity and Simpson Memorial Hospital. You will observe that when the day comes for division into two of the duties of the chair, there will thus be a scholarship appropriate for each. Meantime they are both open to the members of this one class; and my friends will be greatly disappointed if the hope of winning their scholarships do not spur you to an eager competition, following on an earnest study of the subjects for special proficiency in which they are to be awarded.

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