

Additional hints respecting the improvement of the system of medical instruction followed in the University of Edinburgh : humbly submitted to the consideration of the patrons and professors of that institution / [by John Thomson].

Contributors

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THOMSON, J.

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For

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Wm Brown Esq

ADDITIONAL HINTS
RESPECTING THE
IMPROVEMENT
OF THE
SYSTEM OF MEDICAL INSTRUCTION
FOLLOWED IN
The University of Edinburgh ;
HUMBLY SUBMITTED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF
THE PATRONS AND PROFESSORS
OF THAT INSTITUTION.

MDCCCXXVI.

P. Neill, Printer.



GENTLEMEN,

IN the summer of 1824, I had the honour to submit to your consideration some hints respecting the improvement of the literary and scientific education of candidates for the degree of Doctor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh; and I now again most respectfully beg leave to call your attention to what I, in common, I believe, with the greater part of the Medical Profession, regard as two great defects in the present system of medical instruction followed in that Institution; I allude to the arrangements which at present subsist for the teaching of Surgery and Clinical Medicine.

That Surgery is a branch of Medicine of equal importance and extent with Physic, and that it can be taught with advantage by those only who have themselves been employed as Practical Surgeons, are propositions which I conceive will not be contested by any one acquainted with the present state of Surgery; yet these two obvious truths have been entirely lost sight of in the provisions made for having the Principles and Practice of Surgery taught in

the University of Edinburgh; for this branch of Medicine has, till within these few years, been taught there merely as an appendage to the course of Lectures on Anatomy; and, during the last seventy years, it has been taught by Professors, who, though able Anatomists, have never been engaged in the performance of operations on the living body, nor in any of the other practical details of the art.

This defect in the system of Medical instruction in the University of Edinburgh, has repeatedly attracted the attention of the Incorporation and College of Surgeons; and various attempts to supply it have at different times been made by that Body itself, as well as by individual members belonging to it. That these attempts on the part of the College of Surgeons have been resisted, in some instances successfully, and in others unsuccessfully, by the Medical Faculty in the University, is abundantly testified by documents to be found in your records. A short historical sketch of the progress of Lectures on Surgery in Edinburgh will, it is hoped, tend to place this subject in a proper light, and to account in some measure for the less degree of celebrity which the University of Edinburgh has hitherto acquired as a School of Surgery, than as a School of Physic.

THE INCORPORATION OF SURGEONS was first instituted in the year 1505, by a *seal of cause* from the Town Council of Edinburgh; and in that act the Magistrates and Council bind themselves to give the Incorporation a dead

body once in the year, for the purpose of anatomical and surgical demonstrations.

Though the University was founded by James VI. in 1582, the teaching of Anatomy and Surgery remained in the exclusive possession of the Incorporation of Surgeons till the year 1720, when the Incorporation, on the resignation of Alexander Drummond and John Macgill, their joint Professors of Anatomy, unanimously agreed to recommend to the Provost and Town-Council, Dr Alexander Monro, one of their members, to be Professor of Anatomy within the city.

In consequence of that recommendation, Dr Monro was appointed Professor by the Magistrates and Town-Council, and he delivered his Lectures upon Anatomy in the Theatre belonging to the Incorporation of Surgeons till the year 1725, when he was first received into the University.

On the establishment of the Royal Infirmary in 1729, Dr Monro was appointed one of the Surgeons to that Institution, and he continued to discharge the duties of this office with the greatest ability for a number of years, as well as to practise Surgery in private, down to the year 1756, when he received an honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University, and was admitted into the Royal College of Physicians. On this occasion he addressed a letter to the Deacon of the Incorporation of Surgeons, requesting, “ as he had engaged lately in a business which was

thought incompetent with the exercise of Surgery and Pharmacy, both which he was to relinquish, that they would not think it necessary to continue his name on their roll ;” which request was immediately complied with. Though Dr Monro did not receive a Commission from the Magistrates and Town-Council to teach Surgery, and though he never gave any course on this subject distinct from his Lectures on Anatomy, yet his course of lectures continued, during the whole of his lifetime, to be the only one in Scotland, from which any knowledge of Surgery could be obtained. How much the value of the Lectures on Surgery, which were given by this distinguished Professor, was enhanced, by the daily and long-continued opportunities he had enjoyed of personal intercourse with Surgical Patients, may be judged of, from the numerous excellent papers which he published in the Edinburgh Medical Essays.

Dr Alexander Monro *Secundus*, was, in the year 1754, at the age of twenty-one, appointed his Father’s colleague and successor in the Chair of Anatomy. Never did a Professor of his age enter upon the duties of his office with a greater knowledge of the subject which he had received a commission to teach, or a more ardent desire to distinguish himself as an improver of anatomical science ; and it will be acknowledged, I am convinced, by every one who has had the advantage of attending his Lectures, that this desire, instead of suffering any abatement, continued to increase with the number of his years.

After graduating at this University, in the year 1755, Dr Monro was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1759, and came under the usual obligation demanded of the Fellows of that Body not to practise Surgery in any of its branches,—an obligation as incompatible, it is conceived, with the proper duties of a teacher of Surgery, as an obligation to abstain from the practice of dissection would be in a teacher of Anatomy, or as an obligation on the part of a Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry to abstain from making chemical experiments. Had the successive Professors of the Practice of Physic in the University of Edinburgh, after receiving their Commissions, come under an obligation not to practise this branch of Medicine, is it likely that we should ever have heard of the fame of these teachers, or of the celebrity of the Medical School of the University of Edinburgh? How injurious an obligation of this nature, come under by the late and by the present Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, must have been to the progress of Surgery in Scotland, and to the reputation of the University of Edinburgh as a School of Surgery, will be best understood by those who are acquainted with the manner in which Dr Monro *primus*, in Edinburgh; Cheselden, Sharp, Pott, Cline, Abernethy, and Cooper, in London; Callisen in Copenhagen; Desault in Paris; Richter in Göttingen; and Scarpa in Pavia, acquired the knowledge which gave so much value to their Surgical Lectures, and has raised the characters of their respective Schools to such a pitch of eminence in the department of Surgery. Nor ought it

to be forgotten, that it was during the period in which Dr Monro *secundus* was employed in lecturing on Anatomy and Surgery in the University of Edinburgh, that his contemporary Mr Hunter, in a private station in London, by his devotion to the study, practice and teaching of Surgery, laid the foundation of a fame which must be perpetual.

The disadvantage of Surgery being taught in the University by a Professor who was not, and could not, be employed in the practice of the art, soon became apparent to the Incorporation of Surgeons ; and induced a Member of this Body, Mr James Rae, who, in 1766, was appointed one of the four Substitute Surgeons at the Royal Infirmary, to commence a separate course of general Lectures on Surgery. After having delivered this course of lectures for some years, he was requested, in 1769, by the Students, to deliver practical lectures on the chirurgical cases in the Royal Infirmary. This request of the students was communicated by Mr Rae to the Incorporation of Surgeons, and being highly approved of by them, they joined Mr Rae in an application to the Managers of the Royal Infirmary, who unanimously approved of the scheme, in a minute dated 2d October 1769, and signed by Principal Robertson. Mr Rae accordingly conducted two separate Courses of Surgical Lectures for a period of several years.

In August 1772 Mr Rae requested of the College of Surgeons, that they would nominate a Committee to examine the plan of a Course of Lectures on Surgery which

he intended to deliver, and if the Committee should approve of this plan, that the College would be pleased to recommend attendance on these lectures to students of Medicine. At a subsequent meeting of the College, the Committee which had been appointed to examine Mr Rae's plan, consisting of Messrs Spens, Balfour, Alexander Wood and Benjamin Bell, produced the following advertisement, which was approved of by the College, and ordered to be inserted in the Newspapers.

“ The College of Surgeons being desirous to promote every useful undertaking towards the advancement of the knowledge of Surgery, have taken into their consideration a Plan of Lectures on the whole art of Surgery : also practical Discourses on the cases of importance as they occur in the Royal Infirmary, given, for several years past, at their Hall by Mr James Rae. As this course is founded on the practice of the Hospital, and delivered by a surgeon who has been in the habit of constant observation, they recommend it as useful and necessary to the students of Physic and Surgery ; and to render this Course more extensively useful the Society are resolved to communicate to him such cases of importance as may occur in their practice.”

In October 1776, this experienced Surgeon addressed a letter to the College of Surgeons, requesting the College to frame an application to his Majesty, for the royal sanction to establish a Professorship of Surgery in the Univer-

sity of Edinburgh. In this letter, after pointing out to the College the benefits to be expected from such an appointment, Mr Rae adds, " I understand that Dr Monro hearing an application was intended for having a Professorship of Practical Surgery established, has taken some alarm, apprehending it may be prejudicial to him as Professor of Anatomy, and has got his brethren of the College, in a faculty meeting, to give their opinion of the inutility of such a Professorship, as he teaches all that students can learn from it."

The proposal of Mr Rae was referred to a Committee, which reported it to be their opinion, that " The College ought to proceed in their application without loss of time as a measure just and necessary, and which will contribute very much to the improvement of Practical Surgery, as it must be obvious to every unprejudiced person that two such extensive and important branches as Anatomy and Surgery must be more completely taught by two persons properly qualified for each branch, than that both should be taught by one ; and we flatter ourselves a truth so clear and perspicuous, fraught with a prospect of advancing so material a branch of Medicine, will have full weight with Dr Monro, and the other Professors, as well as with every person of liberal sentiments, as we dare not allow ourselves to think that private interest would over-balance their known attention to public advantage." The Committee also suggested that it might be proper, before drawing up a petition to his Majesty, to examine Dr Monro's commis-

sion ; and that if the proposed Professorship should appear to be an infringement of his right, the College, in point of justice, ought to proceed no farther. Dr Monro's commission was accordingly examined ; and the minutes of the College of Surgeons bear, that the Corporation being fully satisfied that the proposed application for establishing a Professorship of Surgery in no-ways interfered with the Professor of Anatomy ; they therefore appointed their Deacon, with his council, to draw up a petition for that purpose to his Majesty.

The Petition, which was drawn up by this Committee, having been approved of by the College, was transmitted by the Deacon, in their name, to Sir Lawrence Dundas, at that time the Member of Parliament for the City of Edinburgh, accompanied by a letter, requesting that he would have the goodness to present this Petition to his Majesty, and use his endeavours to promote a measure so obviously tending to the public benefit. Another letter was, at the same time, sent to the Lord Advocate, inclosing a copy of the petition, and requesting he would favour the views of the College with his countenance and support.

At the ensuing meeting of the College of Surgeons, on the 21st of May 1777, the Deacon produced a letter from Sir Lawrence Dundas, informing him, that he had written to Lord Suffolk, the Secretary of State, to request his Lordship would appoint an hour when he might wait up-

on him with the Petition from the College of Surgeons ; that the day following was fixed on by Lord Suffolk ; but owing to a sudden attack of illness, his Lordship had been hitherto prevented from receiving Sir Lawrence's visit on the subject of their Petition. The Deacon also laid before this Meeting a letter from the Lord Advocate, in which his Lordship states, " That it would give him infinite pleasure if he could be of service to the Society in any particular, but that it was not in his power to interfere in behalf of their application, as he had, many months before, received a letter from the Principal and Medical Professors of the University, requesting, that, if an application should be made for the erection of a Professorship of Surgery in Edinburgh, he would represent to his Majesty's Ministers, that, in the opinion of the University, and particularly of the Medical part, the erection of such a Professorship was useless, and would be very improper ; and that as the subject of this letter, coming from such a respectable quarter, was one upon which he was totally incapable to judge, he could do no more but simply transmit the representation, which had been made to him, to his Majesty's Ministers."

At the next meeting of the College, on the 17th of July 1777, they were informed, that an application had been made by Dr Monro to the Town-Council, to be appointed Professor of Surgery in the University of Edinburgh. The College, regarding this appointment as an infringement of their privileges, empowered their Deacon to de-

sire, at the next meeting of the Town-Council, an extract of Dr Monro's petition, and to crave that a commission for teaching Surgery should not be granted to him till the College should have time to be heard in defence of their privileges.

At a meeting of the College of Surgeons, held on the 4th of August following, the Deacon informed the College, that his council had drawn up a memorial and petition on the subject of Dr Monro's commission, which he had presented to the Magistrates and Town-Council, in consequence of which, they had agreed to refer the matter to the Lord Provost and his Committee, and to suspend all farther proceedings, till they should see whether the College of Surgeons could offer any solid reasons why their former resolutions respecting Dr Monro should not pass into an act of Council.

In this Memorial the Deacon and his Council remarked, " It will be allowed, that the dividing the different branches of Medicine has contributed to their being taught with more success. Anatomy and Surgery are branches so essential, that each affords an ample field for a Professor, and for this reason it is supposed the Professor of Anatomy has always had his commission for Anatomy alone, though the present Professor of Anatomy claims a right to be Professor of Surgery also, which none of his predecessors, though actually Surgeons, either claimed or enjoyed.

“ That Anatomy and Surgery are closely united is not denied, and much praise is due, both to the late Professor Monro and the present Professor, for the ability and attention with which they have taught Anatomy, and the views they have given of the principles of Surgery ; but we must be permitted to affirm, that the improvement of Chirurgical Education in this city is owing to the Institution of the Royal Infirmary, where all the operations of Surgery are executed in sight of the Students, by the Members of the Incorporation of Surgeons, independent of the Professor of Anatomy. But a capacity of operating makes but a small branch of the Profession of a Surgeon ; the skilful treatment of the various chirurgical maladies, so as to render operations unnecessary, forms a more ample and extensive field ; and to give a complete course of Surgery would require more time than the present Professor of Anatomy employs in both branches together.”

The College conceiving, from certain expressions of the Lord Provost, that his Lordship and the Town-Council had not fully understood their meaning in the Memorial and Petition which had been delivered to the Council by their Deacon, authorised the Deacon and his Council to draw up another Memorial, setting forth the claims of the College, and the reasons why, in their judgment, the Professor of Surgery should not only belong to their body, but should be also a practical Surgeon.

On the 19th of August, the Deacon represented to the College, that his Council had met in consequence of the appointment of last meeting; but finding they had not sufficient time to draw up a memorial to be laid before the Provost and Council, who were to meet next day, it was recommended to him to attend the Provost's Committee, and crave a further delay for giving in the memorial; that he did accordingly wait upon the Committee, and asked a delay, but was refused it; the Provost informing him, at the same time, that the Council would proceed next day to confirm their former resolutions with respect to Dr Monro, and give orders for extending his commission; that upon making a report of this to his Council, they advised him to appear the next day at the Council Chamber, and take a protest against the precipitate nomination of Dr Monro; and this he accordingly did, and gave in reasons of protest, which were engrossed in the minutes of Council, and to which the Deacon-Convener adhered. The Deacon then produced a copy of the protest to the meeting. The College approved of what he had done, and ordered the protest to be inserted into their minutes, of which the following is a copy:—

“ I Alexander Hamilton, Deacon of the Incorporation of Surgeons, for myself, and in name of the other Members of Council who shall adhere to me, do protest against the precipitate measure of Council in nominating Dr Alexander Monro, Professor of Anatomy, to

be also Professor of Surgery in this University, without giving the Incorporation of Surgeons full time to be heard. And my reasons of protest are—

“ *1mo*, That the said nomination can prove of no real benefit to the University, as it is certain no man can teach both branches completely within the usual time employed in a course ; nor can this Professor do more by this additional nomination than has been already done by him.

“ *2do*, The charter from King William and Queen Mary, in favour of the Incorporation of Surgeons, gives them an exclusive privilege to operate upon living and dead bodies, and entitles them to be furnished annually by the Magistrates with a subject for the purpose of instructing Students ; and therefore the Professor of Surgery should be appointed out of their body.

“ *3tio*, Whatever merit the Professor of Anatomy may assume to himself, it is well known that the ablest professor can only give the rudiments of the art ; the surgeon must be formed by witnessing the practice on the living body.

“ *4to*, Because the unconstitutional means which have been used by the Professor of Anatomy to prevent a practical surgeon being named Professor of Surgery, and

who had the art to combine the other Professors in support of his measure, some of whom, if left to the dictates of their own mind, would have declared for its utility, are evident marks of a design to monopolize every branch of Medical Instruction ; which attempt, if successful, may have a destructive tendency to the University, of which you are the Patrons.—And,

“ *Lastly*, Because the reservation of the Council of a power to divide the two professions, shows their real sense of its propriety ; and therefore, it was not acting for the benefit of the University, to give a commission for both branches to the present Professor, even during life.”

The College of Surgeons, perceiving distinctly the ambidextrous manœuvre which had been employed to prevent Surgery from being taught in the University by a practical surgeon, as a distinct branch of Medical Science, conceived it to be their duty to insert into all the Edinburgh newspapers the following declaration, bearing date the 1st of October 1777.

“ The College of Surgeons, empowered by royal charter to teach the different branches of their profession, received with pleasure the proposal of Mr Rae, one of their members, in the year 1769, to give a full course of Surgery,

founded on the practice of the Royal Infirmary, the proper school for Surgery, where all chirurgical maladies are treated, and the different operations are executed and directed, by the Surgeons alone.

“ The motives of the Society for promoting this institution, were a full conviction that a separate course of Surgery, properly executed, would prove an advantage to the University, and tend to excite an emulation among the members of the Society, by study and application, to qualify themselves to teach the different branches of their profession ; and, from trial, satisfied of the utility of Mr Rae’s course, they resolve to continue their assistance to promote its success.

(Signed) “ ALEX. HAMILTON.”

Mr Rae having, soon after this period, ceased to lecture, Mr Russel, the present Professor of Clinical Surgery, began, in 1786, to give Lectures on the cases of surgical patients in the Royal Infirmary, and after having continued to deliver these lectures for several years, with great credit to himself, and advantage to the public, he was encouraged to apply to his Majesty’s Ministers for the creation of a Professorship of Clinical Surgery. I have reason to believe, though I have never conversed with Mr Russel on this subject, that he had considerable difficulty in obtaining the consent of Dr *Monro secundus*, to this proposal, and indeed that it was not ob-

tained till Mr Russel agreed that the following clauses should be inserted into the commission he was to receive from the Crown :—" With and under the following restrictions and limitations, viz. That the Professors of Medicine, Anatomy, and Surgery, shall not, by the present appointment, be deprived of any right of giving Clinical Lectures on Surgery in the Royal Infirmary, and that the said James Russel shall not deliver a course of lectures there, at the same time with the Professors of Medicine, Anatomy, and Surgery." How it should ever have been conceived by the Professors of Anatomy, that they had any right whatever to lecture on the cases of surgical patients in the Royal Infirmary ; or how the claim to such a right should have been sanctioned by the *Senatus Academicus*, in altering and modelling, as they afterwards professed to have done, the terms of the Royal Commission, granted to Mr Russel to teach Clinical Surgery, it is impossible to conjecture, as this is a right which could have been bestowed upon the Professors of Anatomy and Surgery, by the Managers of that Institution only, with the consent of the Surgeons practising in it.

It may be remarked, without any disparagement, I conceive, to the Teachers of Surgery in Edinburgh, either living or dead, that, for any reputation in Surgery which this country has acquired since the time of Dr *Monro Primus*, it is greatly, if not chiefly, indebted to the writings of two practical surgeons, Mr Benjamin Bell, and Mr John Bell.

The former, after having been for some time House-Surgeon of the Royal Infirmary of this place, and after having studied Surgery in the Schools of London and Paris, resolved, on his settling as a practitioner in Edinburgh, to supply a great defect in English Medicine, by the preparation of a regular System of Surgery. This work was for many years the only one in the English language from which a student or practitioner of surgery could derive a competent knowledge of the different subjects of which it treats: and though the great and rapid improvements which have been made in Surgical Science since the period of its publication have in some measure superseded its use as a Text-Book, it must ever remain a pleasing memorial of the excellent talents, unwearied industry, and great practical skill, of its author.

Mr John Bell, in the Course of Lectures on Anatomy which he gave for some years in Edinburgh, delivered Lectures on select subjects of Surgery also, which were listened to with the greatest attention by his auditors. His Discourses on Wounds, and his Observations on Aneurism, in particular, have, since their publication, been read with much eagerness and delight by all ranks of medical men, and have contributed, in a powerful manner, to promote the study of these dangerous affections; and, of course, to lead to more correct views than had been previously entertained with respect to their nature and treatment.

The want which was, in the mean while, felt in Edinburgh of a general Course of Lectures on the Principles and Practice of Surgery, induced the individual, who now addresses you, to enter upon this undertaking ; and after having delivered, in a private capacity, repeated courses of Lectures on Surgery, he ventured to apply to the Royal College of Surgeons for their countenance and patronage. He was encouraged to make this application by the particular advice and support of two Senior Members of that body, Mr Andrew Wood and Mr Benjamin Bell, men whose memories will be long held in respect and esteem in Edinburgh, not less on account of their private virtues than of the distinguished rank which they respectively held in their profession. In the month of September 1804, he had the honour to be unanimously appointed Professor of Surgery to the Royal College of Surgeons. No sooner had this appointment taken place, than the Professors of Anatomy and some of their Colleagues took alarm, and, through their influence, remonstrances against it were made to the Magistrates and Town Council by the Heads of some of the public departments in Edinburgh. The Patrons of the University were instructed that they alone possessed the power of licencing any Teachers of Medicine in the City, and that the creation of a Professorship of Surgery by the Royal College of Surgeons, must prove injurious to the interests of their Professor of Anatomy and Surgery in the University. So great was the impression made on the minds of the Town Council by these remonstrances, that, on

the morning of the day on which the Professor of Surgery to the College of Surgeons was to deliver his first lecture, he received a message from the Lord Provost, through one of the Clerks in the City Chambers, expressing a hope that he would not persevere in his intention of lecturing as Professor of Surgery, otherwise the Magistrates and Council would feel it to be their duty to interrupt him and dismiss his audience. To this message, he replied, with due respect, that his first lecture was ready, and that he was resolved to read it at all hazards to the Students of Medicine in Edinburgh. Shortly before the hour of lecture he was waited upon by a Member of the Town Council to inform him, that no obstruction would be offered to him in reading his introductory lecture ; and certainly none was offered to him that day nor ever afterwards, during the seventeen years he had the honour to hold the appointment of Professor to the Royal College of Surgeons.

In his preliminary lecture, which was delivered in Surgeons' Hall, in presence of his Patrons, the Professor of Surgery took occasion to give a slight enumeration of some of the rights and privileges which, at different times, had been the subjects of contest between the respective Professors of Physic and of Surgery in the city of Paris. " I have made choice of Paris," he remarked, "in giving this account, because it was the grand theatre of these contests, and the source from which most other countries of Europe have since borrowed their customs and medical institutions.

These contests, however, have not been confined to Paris alone, but have uniformly arisen in every country in which the distinction between Physician and Surgeon has been confirmed by law ; and there is but too much reason to believe, that they are contests which will continue, in a greater or less degree, so long as separate colleges, or communities, of Physic and Surgery, exist.

“ Among the various points which, at different times, were contested between the Medical Faculty in the University of Paris, and the Practitioners of Surgery, one would scarcely expect to find the right of publicly instructing their respective pupils ; and yet, while Anatomy was almost exclusively taught by the Surgeons, the Physicians, in their turn, uniformly, and most strenuously, maintained, that they were the only good, fit, and competent teachers of Surgery.

“ ‘ The absurdity of having Surgery taught by one set of men, while it is wholly practised by another, seems almost too gross to need pointing out. Such a plan was probably never thought of in any other profession ; and it is, at first view, rather surprising it should ever have been thought of in Surgery.’ But this practice, absurd as it appears to us, and pernicious as it has been, wherever it has been adopted, to the progress of Surgery, had its origin, like many other customs of modern Europe, in the prejudices and absurd opinions of the Church of Rome,

and in that spirit of domination, exclusion, and monopoly, by which most of her institutions at that period were actuated.

“ The dispute, with regard to this point, lasted for several centuries between the College of Surgeons and the Medical Faculty in the University of Paris. These bodies appointed their respective Professors of Surgery ; and the College of Surgeons were repeatedly interdicted, both by the University and by its holy protector the Pope, from teaching publicly the art which they professed. I believe I cannot exhibit to you a juster view of the nature of this disputed point than is to be found in a few passages, which I shall take the liberty to quote from a speech of Rodolph the Brave, Deacon of the College of Surgeons in Paris, delivered by him, about the year 1567, during one of these disputes, in an assembly of his professional brethren. I quote these passages the more readily, that the sentiments which they express, are not of a local or temporary nature, but the plain dictates of common sense, applicable to every age and country.

“ ‘ So blinded are they,’ says Rodolph, speaking of the Medical Faculty in the University, ‘ that every thing which seems to favour them, bears in their eyes the impression of equity. The privileges of the College of Surgeons they regard as so many abuses, and the work of injustice. Even that right, so ancient and so legitimate, the right of pub-

licly instructing our disciples, appears to them to be a total overthrow of all established order. Yet, according to the primary and usual ideas of order, should not knowledge of every kind issue from those who possess it? Divines, are not they the interpreters of religion? Lawyers, are not they the best judges of the law? In all the arts, liberal or mechanical, is it not practical skill which confers the right to teach? and is it not, let me ask, the practice alone of our art which can ever form a skilful surgeon? How can men, who are unacquainted with the practice of Surgery, explain its principles? A merely speculative surgeon would, indeed, be a dangerous guide for students.

“ ‘How, then, shall Physicians, who are in general only spectators of our operations, be able to point out, or to obviate, the difficulties which are daily to be met with in the practice of Surgery? Can they instruct us in an art which they have never practised? Would it not, on the contrary,’ adds this sensible and eloquent surgeon, ‘be a perversion of good order, and a dereliction of our duty, to give up our Public Schools to men who may write books, and read what they deem Lectures on Surgery, but who never performed on the living body a single chirurgical operation? Are these the men to whom we ought to resign our professional chairs, where we have been placed by those very rights by which we have been constituted surgeons?’

“ The resistance of these claims occasioned long and vio-

lent disputes, and each party in these disputes, as its influence at Court or genius for intrigue, was superior, alternately prevailed, till at length, in 1671, Louis XIV., weary of their useless altercations, but anxious to promote both branches of the medical profession, determined that the lectures on Surgery should in future be read at the Jardin Royal, by a Surgeon, and shortly afterwards gave orders that bodies for dissection and the necessary demonstrations, should be freely supplied. ‘The wars which deluged the Continent with blood during the reign of that ambitious Monarch, made Surgery of greater importance to the public than ever. The increase of anatomical knowledge rendered its operations more sure, more exact, and more successful. It rose, as it deserved, in general esteem; and as Paris was considered as the principal source of these improvements in Surgery, which were every where visible, and every where beneficial, the demonstrations in the Jardin Royal were crowded with pupils from all parts of Europe, and, in the year 1724, no fewer than five public Professors of the Theory and Practice of Surgery were appointed in that school.’ The effects which this institution has had, not only on the state of Surgery in France, but in all the other countries of Europe, are too well known to require any explanation *.”

In 1806, the Professor to the College of Surgeons, who, at the particular recommendation of the late Lieutenant-

* Lectures on Inflammation, p. 37.

General Sir Thomas Maitland, had made the nature and treatment of those injuries and diseases which come more peculiarly under the care of the Military Surgeon, the subject of a separate Course of Lectures, was encouraged to apply to his Majesty's Government for a Commission to be Professor of Military Surgery in the University of Edinburgh, by a Nobleman whose patronage and kind attentions he must ever feel to be a proud distinction, as his desire to merit them has long been with him a powerful incentive to exertion. Earl Spencer, at that time Secretary of State for the Home Department, after minute inquiry into the objects and probable usefulness of an institution for the instruction of Medical Students intending to enter the service of the Army and Navy, advised his Majesty to create this Professorship, and was pleased to recommend the Professor of Surgery to the Royal College of Surgeons, as a person qualified to fill that situation.

After having had the honour to receive this Commission, and to present it to the Patrons of the University, in order that the necessary steps might be taken by them for his induction into the University of Edinburgh, the Professor of Military Surgery was regularly summoned by the Provost and Council to attend on a meeting which the Senatus Academicus had been requested by the Patrons to hold for that purpose, on the 7th of November 1806. But, on attending at the hour appointed, along with the College Bailie and several other Members of the Town Council, they,

after much delay, were informed that the Meeting of the *Senatus Academicus*, being an adjourned meeting held for a special and very important purpose, the business on which they had come could not be taken into consideration that day ; that they regretted the trouble these gentlemen had in giving their attendance on this occasion, and that they would not fail to communicate without delay, the result of the deliberation of the meeting to their Honourable Patrons. The result of the deliberation of this and of the preceding meeting was, that a Memorial, drawn up by the Medical Faculty, and approved of by a majority of the *Senatus Academicus*, pointing out the injurious consequences which, in their opinion, were likely to result to the University, and in particular to the Professors of Medicine, Anatomy and Surgery, from the establishment of a chair for the teaching of Military Surgery, “ should be respectfully transmitted to their Honourable Patrons, with a view, after receiving their consideration, to be by them conveyed to his Majesty’s Ministers, as containing the sentiments of the *Senatus Academicus* on the subject to which the Memorial refers ; and that at the same time an intimation should accompany the Memorial, when so transmitted, that if the purpose of their Honourable Patrons for carrying forward the induction of Mr Thomson, is not changed by this communication, the *Senatus Academicus* will be ready to receive the Commission to him as *Regius Professor of Military Surgery*, on any day which the Patrons may be pleased to propose.” The Patrons, on receiving this communication,

declined to transmit to His Majesty's Ministers the Memorial of the Medical Faculty, and gave orders to the Senatus Academicus that Mr Thomson's induction should be proceeded in with the least possible additional delay. He was accordingly received into the University as a Member of the Senatus Academicus on the 15th November 1806; and during the fourteen years he continued to teach Military Surgery, he never once heard it insinuated that the institution of this Professorship had proved, in the slightest degree, injurious to the interests of the Professor of Anatomy, or to those of any other member of the Medical Faculty. Nor, indeed, was it possible that it should, as attendance on the lectures on Military Surgery was quite voluntary on the part of Students, and afforded no qualification either for a medical degree or a surgical diploma.

The Memorial of the Medical Faculty explains so distinctly the notions which that Body entertained respecting the extent, divisions and relations of surgical science, and the manner in which this branch of Medicine may be best taught in the University; and it, at the same time, explains so unreservedly the nature of the privileges of which this Faculty conceived themselves to be possessed, and the grounds upon which they have uniformly resisted every attempt that has been made to have the different parts of Surgery taught in the University by practical Surgeons, as branches of Medicine distinct from Anatomy, that it merits

the attention of those who take an interest in the progress of Surgery in Scotland.

Since the application of the College of Surgeons to the Crown in 1777, no additional attempt has been made, it is believed, to have Surgery taught in the University by a practical Surgeon; but the want of this has become so apparent, that, besides the Course of Lectures on the Principles and Practice of Surgery, instituted by the College of Surgeons in 1804, no fewer than four other distinct and full Courses of Lectures on Surgery have since been successively undertaken in Edinburgh, and are at present delivered annually by teachers who are practical Surgeons.

Such an increase in the number of Lecturers on Surgery in Edinburgh, can be accounted for only, I conceive, either by the increased demand for surgical information which has taken place during the last twenty years, or by the increasing conviction on the part of the Medical Profession that the course of Surgery delivered in the University of Edinburgh is not calculated to supply the information wanted by students; and that Surgery is an art or science that can be taught with advantage by those only who are engaged in its practical exercise.

In the Petition presented in 1777 by Dr *Monro secundus* to the Patrons of the University, it is particularly

stated, that, in the teaching of his class, Anatomy and Surgery had long been conjoined in one course by his Father and by himself; and the propriety of continuing this conjunction, is urged as a principal reason for extending his commission to teach both branches, in opposition, it will be recollected, to the proposal that was made at that time by the College of Surgeons to have Surgery taught in the University as a branch of medicine distinct from Anatomy by a practical Surgeon; and it deserves to be remembered, also, that the advantages which were supposed to result from this mode of conjoining these two branches in one course, are particularly insisted upon in the Memorial written by the Medical Faculty in 1806, with a view to oppose the introduction of a course of lectures on Military Surgery into the University, and form, indeed, the only argument which has ever been employed by the Medical Faculty against the establishment of a separate Professorship of Surgery in the University.

That the Town-Council, however, in granting this double commission to Dr *Monro secundus*, entertained some doubts as to the propriety of confiding to one individual the duty of teaching two branches of Medicine of so great extent and importance as Anatomy and Surgery, may be inferred from their having “reserved to themselves and their successors in office, the power to separate the offices of Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at any time after the decease of the said Dr Alexander *Monro*, if they shall

find it proper, or for the interest of the University to do so." And that the present Dr **Monro** holds his commission under these terms, appears from the Act of Council nominating him, in 1798, joint Professor of Medicine, Anatomy and Surgery, with his Father, which expressly provides, that "the survivor of them shall be subjected and liable to such rules and regulations as the **Magistrates** and Council have already made, or may hereafter make, with respect to the said office."

From the terms of the last edition of the *Statuta Solennia*, it would appear, that the Medical Faculty in the University of Edinburgh still continue to regard one general course of Lectures on Anatomy and Surgery as calculated to afford all the Surgical instruction necessary to the proper education of their graduates: an estimation of the value of Surgery similar to that which has decreed, that one year's additional attendance on Medical Classes, that is, attendance on the classes of two Members of the Medical Faculty, for the space of six months, shall be held to be equivalent for Graduation, to a degree obtained by four years study of Letters and Arts in a University. That the present Professor, however, has become convinced of the impossibility of teaching two so extensive and important branches of Medicine as Anatomy and Surgery, in one course of the usual academic duration, is apparent from the fact, that, for several years past, he has delivered his Lectures on Surgery at a different hour from those on Anatomy,

and that his students are admitted to them by a separate though gratuitous ticket. Notwithstanding this deviation from the practice of his predecessors, the separate Course of Surgery has never yet corresponded in extent to what is demanded by the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, of Courses of Lectures received by them as qualifying Students for examination at their Hall; so that this College has not been reduced to the necessity of considering whether they ought to admit as qualifying for a Surgical Diploma, a Course of Lectures on Surgery delivered by one who has come under an obligation not to learn this branch of Medicine—in the only School in which a knowledge of it can be obtained, namely, that of practical experience,—merely because the course of lectures is of six months' duration, and delivered by a Professor in an University. As the Regulations of other Public Boards, however, make no provision for the Course of Surgery being of any definite duration, they have not been protected against this most extraordinary anomaly; and accordingly the possession of the Surgical ticket of the Professor of Anatomy in the University of Edinburgh, supersedes the necessity of Students who apply to these boards for diplomas or commissions, having attended a Course of Lectures on Surgery, by a practical Surgeon.

But even were the present Professor of Anatomy and Surgery a practical Surgeon delivering to the Students instructions in Surgery, which were as much as possible the

result of his own personal experience, it is obvious that his present commission makes no provision for—if it even authorises him in—delivering a separate and full Course of Lectures on Surgery ; so that he may revert to the former system of teaching Anatomy and Surgery in one course, whenever he may find that the labour of delivering two separate courses is not recompensed by a proportional increase of emolument. But this uncertain footing is surely not one on which the system of education pursued in a great National Seminary should be permitted to continue. If a separate Course of Lectures on Surgery be necessary to a proper Medical education,—if Surgery be a science of sufficient importance and dignity to admit of its being taught within the walls of the University,—if it be a science of too great extent to admit of its being taught as a mere appendage to a Course of Lectures on Anatomy—there only remains this very obvious question for your determination,—By what manner of person will it be most for the interest of the Public, and for the honour of the University, that this course should be taught ? Whether by one who is, or by one who is not, engaged in the practice of the art which he undertakes to teach—by one who is charged with the duty of delivering a Course of Lectures on another branch of Medicine of great extent, and of infinite importance to the Student, and which other Teachers find to afford sufficient occupation for the time they can bestow upon it, or by one who is able to devote his undivided attention to the study, the practice, and the teaching of Surgery ?

If a proposal, to all appearance so reasonable in itself as that of the establishment of a Professorship of Surgery, distinct from Anatomy, in the University of Edinburgh, requires to be supported by the argument of precedent, I doubt much whether you will find on the Continent of Europe a single instance of an University containing a Medical School, in which one Professor is charged with the duties of teaching both Anatomy and Surgery, far less an instance of Surgery being taught by a Professor pledged to abstain from the practice of the art. In the Universities of Bologna, Breslau, Bonn, and Berlin ; of Freiburg, Giessen, Greifswald, Göttingen, and Genoa ; of Halle and Heidelberg ; of Leipzig, Marburg, Moscow and Munich ; of Paris, Padua, Pavia and Pisa ; of Rome, Turin, Vienna and Wurzburg, you will find that Anatomy and Surgery are taught by separate Professors ; and the latter science uniformly by men who study and practise Surgery as their profession.

Deeply as I am impressed with the conviction, that the allotment of Anatomy and Surgery to two separate Professors would be highly advantageous to Students of Medicine, and to the credit of the University, I should feel very great reluctance in recommending the present adoption of this measure, if there were reason to apprehend that it was calculated to injure, in any degree, the reputation or interests of the Professor in whom these two branches of instruction are at present conjoined. So far, however, from seeing any

grounds for such an apprehension, I have the satisfaction to believe, that the natural tendency of the measure would be directly the reverse. There is no one of the strictly Medical Classes which is likely to be more numerous attended than that of Anatomy, because Anatomy is a branch of knowledge which all Medical Students must acquire, to whatever department of the profession they may propose subsequently to devote themselves; it is one upon which they enter at the commencement of their Medical Studies, and which the whole course of these studies tends to remind them they can never know too thoroughly. Were the Professor of Anatomy at liberty, therefore, to devote his talents and time, the experience he has already acquired, and the peculiar advantages which he enjoys, to teach the Anatomy of the Human Body in its sound and morbid states, and to illustrate his course with such surgical reflections only as may naturally arise out of the anatomical demonstrations, there does not appear the least reason to doubt that his class would be still more numerous attended than it is at present, and his emoluments proportionally increased. Such, at least, are the results which I would anticipate from all I know of the inclinations, habits, and even prejudices of Medical Students.

In thus bringing under your consideration the propriety of establishing a separate Professorship of the Principles and Practice of Surgery in the University of Edinburgh, I feel that I am discharging a duty which I owe to the Pub-

lic, to the Medical Profession in general, and to the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in particular; and I presume to hope, that the observations which I have made on this subject, will not be the less favourably regarded by you, that they have been offered by one who has renounced the teaching as well as the practice of Surgery.



The second defect, Gentlemen, in the system of Medical Instruction pursued in the University of Edinburgh, to which I am anxious that your attention should be particularly directed, relates to the mode in which the Lectures on Clinical Medicine are at present conducted in this School. It would be difficult, I believe, to give a more accurate and concise account of the nature and objects of Clinical Lectures than has been done by the late Dr James Gregory, in the following passage of his Additional Memorial to the Managers of the Royal Infirmary: "Clinical Lectures are," he remarks, "practical Medical Lectures, which differ from the general systematic Lectures on the Practice of Physic, in this respect, that while, in the latter, the Professor treats of the several diseases to which the human body is subject, considered in a general view, without any reference to the peculiarities that may take place in individual patients; in the Clinical Lectures, the Professor endeavours to point out to his Pupils the peculiarities in the case of every individual patient with respect to the

causes, the symptoms, the progress, the probable event, and the actual termination of the disease; the reasons for employing a particular plan of cure, for choosing certain remedies, for varying the administration of these, or, in some cases, for changing them altogether, and employing other remedies; and he endeavours to point out and to distinguish those symptoms, whether usual or accidental, that proceed from the disease, and those favourable or unfavourable, common or uncommon, which proceed from the remedies employed. In short, the Clinical Lectures are just a commentary on the practice which the Professor employs on the patients under his care."

From this account of Clinical Lectures on Medicine, given by one who had himself been engaged in this exercise for a period of twenty-six years, it is obvious, that, to conduct such a course with advantage to Students, must be at once the most important and difficult duty in which a Teacher of Medicine can be employed. To discharge this duty faithfully to his patients, usefully to his pupils, and with credit to himself, and to the school of which he is a member, the Clinical Teacher must possess a remarkable, and perhaps not very frequent, combination of the qualifications of a Practitioner and Teacher of Medicine. He must possess that extensive, and, at the same time, accurate knowledge of diseases, that quick perception of their characteristic phenomena, that faculty of foreseeing the various changes which particular cases of disease may in their

progress undergo, that fertility of resource in warding off symptoms of an untoward character, or combating them when they occur, and that power of distinguishing between the phenomena of functional and organic diseases, and of tracing the connection which nature has established between the symptoms of diseases and the morbid states of the organs and textures of the body, which can be acquired only by long personal intercourse with the sick, and certainly no where so well as in the Wards of a public Hospital; whilst, at the same time, he must possess a minute acquaintance with the literature of medicine, and with the opinions and modes of practice prevailing in other Medical Schools,—the power of discriminating amidst the innumerable heaps of observations and theories that are daily thrust on the attention of medical men,—the results of experience that are just and important, from the speculations that are idle, erroneous, or even mischievous,—and, at the same time, a facility of communicating his ideas to others,—qualities which make the Lectures of those Teachers, in whom they are combined with practical experience, at once so pleasing and so instructive. But these are qualifications which must be the slow growth of much labour, study, opportunity for practical observation, and the leisure as well as the power of profiting by it.

The necessity which exists, that Students of Medicine, before leaving the Academic benches, to take charge of the health and lives of their fellow men, should have opportu-

nities of witnessing the practice of Physicians of experience and skill, must have become apparent almost as soon as regular Schools of Medicine were instituted. But it seems to have been at the Hospital of St Francis at Padua, in the year 1578, that the practice of giving regular Lectures on the Cases of Patients actually under treatment, was established *. The Physicians who were appointed the first Clinical Professors, were enjoined, we are told, to open the bodies of such patients as should die, in order to discover the seats of their diseases. Before the middle of the 17th century, the practice of delivering Clinical Lectures had been introduced into the Medical Schools of Holland, by Straten of Utrecht, and Otho Heurnius of Leyden; and in 1658 it was vigorously resumed by Sylvius de le Boe, the successor of Heurnius in the Chair of Practical Medicine at Leyden. It was in the same School, that, at the beginning of the 18th century, the practice of delivering Clinical Lectures was so successfully pursued by the illustrious Boerhaave, by whose pupils it was conveyed to other Medical Schools, and particularly to those of Edinburgh and Vienna. How much this mode of instruction contributed to raise the reputation of the two latter Schools, is too well known to require to be insisted upon.

In France, no provision seems to have been made for having Clinical Lectures regularly delivered, before the creation of the new Schools of Medicine, at the commence-

* Letter to Sir Joseph Banks, by Dr Beddoes, 1808.

ment of the Revolution, though previously to this time Clinical Lectures had been delivered at the Hôpital de la Charité, by M. Dubois de Rochefort, which were continued by M. Corvisart, his illustrious Pupil and successor. But, if the French were tardy in availing themselves of this mode of instruction, it must be allowed that they have recently pursued it with more vigour, ability, and success, than has hitherto been done by the Clinical Professors in the Medical Schools of any other country. The study of Pathological Anatomy, that important branch of medical science, which consists in tracing the phenomena of diseases to morbid alterations of the different textures and organs of the body, and which it is interesting to observe, formed a primary object with those by whom the practice of giving Clinical Lectures was originally set on foot, has received, within these few years, in the Clinical Schools of Paris, Montpellier and Strasburg, an impulse greater, if we except perhaps that from the labours of the Hunters and of Baillie in this country, than any which has been communicated to it since the days of Morgagni.

The right to deliver Clinical Lectures on Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, does not at present depend upon any direct appointment given by the Crown or by the Patrons of the University, or on any rules or regulations embodied by the Patrons in the Commissions of any of the Professors whom they nominate, but on a private arrangement between the Senatus Academicus and the Managers

of the Royal Infirmary, in consequence of which, each member of the Medical Faculty is entitled, in his turn, to take the medical charge of certain Wards in the Infirmary, and to deliver Lectures on the cases of the patients whom they contain.

That the duty of delivering Clinical Lectures on Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, even though shared amongst the members of the Medical Faculty, hitherto six in number, has been felt as a very serious labour, and a heavy encroachment on their time, by those who, besides their ordinary duties as Professors, were engaged in extensive private practice, may be inferred from the following account of the progress of Clinical Lectures on Medicine in Edinburgh, given by the late Dr Gregory :—" Far from being eager," he remarks, " to attend in the clinical wards, each in his turn, for the sake of the improvement and experience which they might acquire, many of the medical Professors could never be induced, either by the emoluments of that office, or their own acknowledged sense of duty, to take any share of the Clinical Lectures. Dr John Rutherford, the original Professor of the Practice of Physic in this University, had the merit of beginning the medical Clinical Lectures, and had them all to himself for seven or eight years; but as soon as he found that some of his colleagues chose to undertake them, he withdrew from them; this was about fifty years ago. For some years afterwards, Dr Alexander Monro *primus*, Dr Whytt, and Dr Cul-

len, had the Clinical Lectures among them. From 1766 to 1773, all the time that my Father was a Professor in this University, he and Dr Cullen had the winter Clinical Lectures between them ; during which time, I believe, not more than one or two summer courses of Clinical Lectures were given, and these by Dr Francis Home only. Soon after my Father's death, Dr Cullen's family prevailed on him to withdraw from the Clinical Lectures, perceiving clearly that the labour of them, in addition to his other academical and professional duties, was too much for him. Dr Plummer, Dr Alston, the present Dr Alexander Monro *senior*, Dr Black, and, what is still more remarkable, the late Dr John Hope, though he was a physician to the Hospital, never would take any share of the Clinical Lectures. When I was appointed Professor of the Practice of Physic, in 1776, not one of the four senior professors, Dr Monro, Dr Cullen, Dr Hope, and Dr Black, would take any share of them ; of course they fell to the two junior professors, Dr Francis Home and myself : and, on the same principle, we had them entirely between us two for fourteen years. I had the merit of prevailing on the present Dr Daniel Rutherford to take a share of the Clinical Lectures ; but that I found no easy matter to accomplish ; nor indeed did I get it accomplished till he was appointed one of the ordinary physicians to the Infirmary, which I think was not till about four years after he had been appointed Professor of Physic and Botany ; and I believe I had at least as much merit, and as much difficulty, in prevailing on Dr

Rutherford to continue to take his share of the Clinical Lectures ; nor do I believe that I should have succeeded in that object, and I certainly should not have continued to take a share of them myself, if the labour had not been made lighter, or at least less frequent in its return, by our junior colleagues, Dr Duncan, Dr Hope, and Dr James Home, sharing it with us. Though I have bestowed much good advice upon him for that purpose, I have not yet prevailed on Dr Alexander Monro *junior* to take any share of the Clinical Lectures. The plain truth is, that they are so severe a labour, both in point of attention and time, that all of us feel them very irksome, even though our time of attendance is but three months ; and, as Clinical Lectures cannot be prepared beforehand, as those on every other branch of physic may be, and ought to be, the incessant drudgery of preparing them, from day to day, and the consequent interruption of all other study, and much other business, even for so short a time as three months, is often very inconvenient, and sometimes quite intolerable."

To this statement of Dr Gregory's, in order to bring it down to the present period, it is only necessary to add, that he himself ceased to deliver Clinical Lectures on Medicine for many years before his death, and that they are at present delivered by four of the members of the Medical Faculty in rotation. It is obvious, therefore, that the duty of teaching this important branch of medical education has never been, in the University of Edinburgh, the peculiar province of

any single Professor, but has always been, and is at present, shared amongst those members of the Medical Faculty who are willing to undertake it. That this duty has been, and that it continues to be, discharged ably, conscientiously, and zealously, will not be denied ; but that the present system of conducting the Clinical Lectures on Medicine is liable to great objections, and susceptible of much improvement, are points which, I feel assured, will be readily allowed by those who have been engaged in delivering them.

The delivery of Clinical Lectures on Medicine is obviously a duty, for the performance of which the members of the Medical Faculty cannot be supposed to be all equally well qualified. No one of them, indeed, has been appointed to his situation in consequence of a conviction on the part of the Patrons of his being peculiarly qualified to teach this branch of medical education. There surely does not exist so immediate a connection between the Practice of Physic, on the one hand, and Anatomy, Chemistry, or Botany, on the other, as to render it, in all instances, certain that the Professors of these sciences will make the best guides to students in the practice of Physic. But the circumstance of duties of a Medical nature being attached to these Chairs, as at present, may, on the occurrence of vacancies, prevent them from being filled by the individuals who are the best qualified to discharge the duties more strictly belonging to them ; whilst, on the other hand, the University may be deprived of the services of

individuals admirably well qualified to teach Clinical Medicine, from their not being profoundly skilled in, or capable of teaching, Anatomy, Chemistry, or Botany. Nor can you fail to perceive, that those members of the Medical Faculty who stand highest in the public estimation as medical practitioners, will, upon the present system of rotation, have the least time to bestow on the duty of teaching Clinical Medicine; since, from this duty, and consequently the emolument which it brings, being only occasional, no temptation is held out to those by whom it is discharged, to limit or to contract the sphere of their private practice; and to devote their talents, their time, and experience, to the study and teaching of this the most difficult and important branch of Medical Education.

But, even supposing all the Members of the Medical Faculty to be well qualified to teach Clinical Medicine, and each equally so with the rest of his brethren, it must not be forgotten how much a talent for teaching any branch of knowledge is improved by frequent practice. From the universal acknowledgment of this so familiar principle, has proceeded that gradual increase in the number of Professors of Medicine, as well as of all the other branches of science in every University that has kept pace with the progress of knowledge. In the Medical School of Paris, the branches of Medical Science, the teaching of each of which is at present allotted to a separate Professor, are no fewer than sixteen in number; and, whilst two

Professors are attached to the Chairs of the Practice of Physic, and the Practice of Surgery respectively, no fewer than three distinct Courses of Lectures on Clinical Surgery, and four Courses on Clinical Medicine, are delivered by separate Professors, appointed solely for that purpose.

Some notion of the loss of practical experience sustained by the Clinical School of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, in consequence of the system of rotation, may be formed from the consideration, that, if the duty of delivering Clinical Lectures on Medicine were confided to one permanent Professor, he would be employed in this exercise for the space of nine months in each year; whereas, upon the present collegiate system, each Professor gives no more than nine months of clinical instruction in the course of four years. Let the Medical Faculty try a similar experiment on any other branch of medical education. Let any four of them undertake to divide amongst them the duty of teaching Anatomy, or the Practice of Physic, in alternate *trimestres*, and every one will be immediately struck with the unreasonableness of the project. Yet it is impossible to reflect upon the difficulties and labour of delivering Clinical Lectures on Medicine, without perceiving that this branch of medical instruction is, from various obvious considerations, less suited than any of the other departments of Medicine, for this system of rotation.

The minute accuracy with which the phenomena and

progress of all diseases, acute and chronic, the effects of remedies, and, in case of death, the state of the different viscera, must be observed and recorded by the Clinical Teacher, and the peculiar advantages which are thus afforded for the study of the constitution of Epidemics, that interesting field of inquiry, which, nearly two centuries ago, was so successfully laboured by Dr Sydenham, must at all times confer a high value on the records of a Clinical Hospital. If, therefore, we consider the number and importance of the works that have proceeded from the different Clinical Schools of Medicine on the Continent of Europe, (and particularly from that of Vienna, which, it will be remembered, was nearly cotemporaneous in its foundation with that of Edinburgh, during the time it has been successively under the care of De Haen, Stoll, and Hildenbrand), and reflect, on the other hand, that only two works, of much interest, indeed, but not of great extent, have, during the same period, been contributed by the Clinical School of Edinburgh to the annals of this important department of Medicine, we cannot but believe that a great loss has arisen to the progress of Medical Science, and to the reputation of the Medical School of Edinburgh, from that system of rotation among the Clinical Professors, which renders it impossible for any one of them to carry on a continued train of practical observation in the Royal Infirmary.

If, indeed, it should ever unfortunately happen, that individuals were appointed to teach the Science of Medicine

in the University, whom the Public, either from distrust of their practical skill, or from any other cause whatsoever, did not employ as practitioners of the art, it would, no doubt, be very desirable that such teachers should have an opportunity of witnessing medical practice; but would the Managers of the Royal Infirmary endure to be told, that to such men they should entrust the charge of the whole, or of a portion, of the most dangerous cases which their Hospital received? or, even if they should be so neglectful of the sacred duty reposed in them, would the scanty opportunities of practical observation which the present rotatory system of Clinical instruction affords to each of the Professors, be of itself sufficient to qualify them to become safe guides to Students in the Practice of Physic?

Without wishing in any respect to exaggerate the differences in the systems of Medical Practice pursued by different practitioners, can any thing be conceived more likely to perplex a young man introduced for the first time to medical practice, than being made to pass in the space of nine months, under the tuition of three different practical preceptors?

To those, indeed, who are capable of profiting by the lesson, it may be interesting and useful to have the opportunity of perceiving how steadily Nature works out her end, however various may be the means that are employed

to alter her course: but the variety of modes of practice which Students must witness under such a system of rotation, must, it is conceived, much more frequently tend to confound their understandings, and to produce in them that unfortunate, because enervating, belief, that Physic is a science in which no fixed principles have yet been, or are likely ever to be, established.

The objections which were urged by Dr Gregory against the system of surgical attendance on the Royal Infirmary, in quick rotation, by the Members of the College of Surgeons, on an occasion so memorable that it cannot yet be effaced from your recollection, appear, *mutatis mutandis*, to be so applicable to the present system of Medical Clinical Instruction, that I feel persuaded it is impossible to place the errors of this system in a clearer light than by quoting from his Memorial the following paragraphs.

“ That system,” observes Dr Gregory, “ indirectly obliges the youngest, the most inexperienced, and who must therefore be presumed the least skilful, to undertake that nice and arduous task; while it leaves the most experienced and skilful at liberty, and even affords them a strong inducement, to decline it. These may decline it without injury to their own well established character; even their great occupation in private practice may be an excuse for doing so; while their prudent reluctance to risk

their own character, by taking any share in a system which they know to be bad, and by which they have much to lose, and nothing to gain, is a strong motive for withdrawing from it. But a young surgeon, rather wishing to begin, than actually beginning, the private practice of his profession, may naturally wish to have an opportunity of performing on the sick poor in the Hospital all the operations of Surgery, not one of which he had performed before. He may think it a good piece of education in his profession. At any rate, he cannot decline to attend in his turn, without seeming to acknowledge some consciousness of his own inferiority to his professional brethren, who are eager to undertake the same task.

“ I take it for granted that no person will dispute, that a young and unpractised Surgeon will acquire some improvement in the exercise of his profession, by attending in an Hospital, and treating such patients in his department as are admitted ; and by performing, probably for the first time in his life, such operations as are required. It is avowedly for the sake of this kind of improvement to all alike, that the Royal College of Surgeons have been anxious to have the right of attending and operating in this Hospital, open to all its members in rotation.

“ Any improvement which a young Surgeon could get, by attending and operating for two months, I should think, must be but inconsiderable ; certainly very little compared

to what he *might*, and with due attention on his part *would*, acquire by attending for six months, or for a twelvemonth, or still better, for several years continually. To enable a young Practitioner, either in Physic or Surgery, to obtain improvement by experience, it is not enough that a certain number of patients come under his care ; he must have time to acquire the *habit*, the *facility*, the *readiness*, of attending to so many different cases in quick succession, of judging and acting, as we say, on the spur of the occasion, and applying justly, and with precision, the general principles of Physic or Surgery to those particular cases.

“ Still more time, and leisure, and habit, and the feeling of that ease which habit alone can give, are necessary to enable a practitioner to compare together a number of different cases of the same disease ; to try with due caution different modes of cure ; and, at any rate, to observe with accuracy the progress of the disease, and the effects of the remedies employed, and to draw the proper inferences from all that he observes.

“ It is just the accumulation of many such practical inferences, from many particular cases, accurately compared together, and the facility and habit of applying that knowledge, and the general principles of Physic and Surgery, to particular instances ; and in Surgery the manual dexterity acquired by frequent repetition of operations, that constitute the great superiority of a judicious, attentive, ex-

perienced practitioner, over a young man of equally good education, and equal, or even much better natural talents.

“ That kind of practice, and that great number and variety of cases, which occur at once, or in very quick succession, in an Hospital, and which, after some time and habit, become the most instructive of all, are more apt, at first, to confound, and embarrass, and oppress, a young practitioner, or even an old one, who is not accustomed to practise in such a situation.

“ I doubt much whether two months, or three times two months, can be sufficient to enable a young Surgeon to get the better of that confusion and embarrassment, and acquire the habit of hospital practice, or put him so much at his ease, that he can profit much, if indeed he can begin to profit, by what he sees or what he does.

“ But be his improvement more or less in the course of his two months' attendance, at the end of that time it is lost to the Hospital for many months at least, probably for some years, perhaps for ever. Nay, it is in a great measure lost to himself; for what was acquired by habit, and depends on habit, will soon be lost by disuse, or the want of habit. But whatever become of the individual, and the improvement which he acquired in his two months' attendance in the Hospital, it is plain, at least, that it cannot be transferred, like the gold chain of my Lord Provost, to his successor in office. *He* begins to attend and to operate just

on purpose to acquire the same kind of improvement. Now, that improvement which the one has got, and which the other wants to get, or the superiority of the one over the other, whose natural talents and education must be supposed equal to those of the former, at the end of the first two months, if it could be measured, and expressed accurately in language, would denote, with mathematical precision, the amount of the injury or the evil which the Hospital suffers by the change of the experienced for the inexperienced Surgeon ; an evil not to be compared to any pecuniary loss, and not to be compensated by any pecuniary advantage ; for they are things incommensurable ; it is injustice and cruelty to the patients, if done or permitted from any consideration but irresistible necessity.

“ An evil of the same kind, but incomparably less in degree, must, from time to time, occur in every Hospital, from such necessity, by the death or resignation of the Physicians or Surgeons who are permanently appointed to it, unless care be taken to provide against the evil (as certainly should be done) by the appointment of assistants or substitutes, who may be gradually and effectually trained to the duty of the Hospital, and be able and ready on any vacancy to supply the places of their respective principals. This, I believe, is now generally, if not universally, done in all the great Hospitals of London, and in many other places.

“ But even though this very rational and easy precau-

tion were neglected, and a perfect novice in Hospital practice, or in every kind of practice ; for example, a youth of one and twenty years of age, who has just finished his apprenticeship and education, were appointed to succeed as eminent a Surgeon as Mr Pott or Mr Hunter ; though the evil would be great, it would be but transient, after a few months it would every day be growing less ; and, in a few years, would no longer be felt, or supposed to exist. The young practitioner, if he was not deficient in natural talents, in the acquired preliminary knowledge of his profession, and in assiduous attention to the duties of his office, which accomplishments, though they cannot absolutely be insured by any mode of appointment, are to be presumed, at least as much in the case of Election as of Rotation, might soon equal in skill, and rival in fame, his great predecessor."

The remedy which suggests itself for the removal of these defects is simple, and there seems just reason to hope that it would prove efficacious. The appointment of a Professor, whose special duty it should be to teach this branch of Medical Education, would go, as far as any institution of the kind can go, to secure its being taught to most advantage, by enabling the Patrons to select for the duty an individual whom they considered well qualified to fulfil it ; by enabling the individual appointed to devote his time exclusively to qualifying himself for the duty ; by securing to the Patients and Students, and to the Public at large, the

benefit of a continued train of observation, whilst it would tend, at the same time, to improve the whole system of Medical Education, by enabling each of the other Members of the Medical Faculty to direct his undivided attention to the department of the science which he is appointed to teach.

At an early period of the Medical School in the University of Edinburgh, when it could afford to support only a limited number of Professors, great advantage undoubtedly resulted to the public from the Professors of the other branches of Medicine superadding to their ordinary Academic duties that of teaching Clinical Medicine, just as similar beneficial effects resulted from the Professor of Anatomy giving Lectures on Surgery. The present flourishing condition of the School, however, seems to admit, and the great extension of the boundaries of Medicine seems to require, a further division of labour amongst the Medical Professors, in order that all the necessary branches of medical knowledge may be taught as fully as possible, and that each Professor may keep pace with the progress of his own department of the Science, and be able to do justice to the numerous Pupils committed to his charge.

If a separate Professor were appointed to teach Clinical Medicine, it might reasonably be hoped, that, instead of the two weekly lectures, which have hitherto formed, along with the daily visit, the whole amount of the Clinical Instruction, this Class would be assembled daily like the other

Medical Classes. And whilst a Lecture on Clinical Medicine might be delivered at least three times in the course of the week, the hour of meeting on the intermediate days might be most profitably occupied in the examination of the Students, on the cases of the patients, and on the remedies or plans of treatment employed for their cure or relief. Measures might also be devised for instructing the Students practically in the mode of examining patients; of drawing up histories of their cases, and of describing the morbid alterations of structure which appear in those patients, the bodies of whom may be inspected after death.

It will, I am sure, be considered as no small recommendation to this proposal, that, while it must tend greatly to improve the knowledge of Students in the Practice of Physic, it will not entail upon their education any additional expence.

That a proposal for adding two new Professors to the Senatus Academicus, will be approved of by all those who have already obtained admission into that Body, it would be too much to expect. The resistance which has been already so frequently made to the introduction of Teachers of the different branches of Surgery into the University, even when these attempts proceeded from, or were seconded by, the College of Surgeons; the long continued, though ultimately unsuccessful, opposition to the establishment of a Professorship of Conveyancing, notwithstanding the

strong support which this measure received from the Society of Writers to the Signet; the success with which the establishment of Chairs for teaching Political Economy and Comparative Anatomy, and Veterinary Medicine, has hitherto been resisted, notwithstanding the liberal offer of a body of private individuals in the one case, and of the Highland Society in the other, to endow these Chairs, and the difficulty which was so lately experienced in convincing the Senatus Academicus of the propriety of adding the Midwifery Class to the Medical Curriculum, fully evince how difficult it is, even for, what must be considered as, a body of the best educated men in the country, to witness, without jealousy, the extension of the same privileges to others, of which they themselves are already possessed. There is one Chair, however, the establishment of which in the University, we may reasonably anticipate will be hailed by the Senatus Academicus with universal concord, that of a Professor of Music. Thanks to General Reid, it will not be insisted on, as in the case of other new Professorships, that the duties of that office are already amply fulfilled. The Patrons will not upon this, as upon other similar occasions, be assured by the Senatus Academicus, that the power of Music over the Mind occupies no fewer than ∞ Lectures in the Course of the Professor of Moral Philosophy,—that its connection with Poetry and Oratory is amply illustrated by the Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,—that its influence over diseases is insisted on at great length by the Professor of the Prac-

tice of Physic,—that the principles of the construction of Musical Instruments are luminously explained by the Professor of Natural Philosophy,—that, by the aid of Hydrogen Gas, and of Tubes of Glass, Earthen-Ware, or Metal, the Professor of Chemistry annually produces “sounds of sweetest melody,” to the infinite delight of the popular part of his audience; and that the Music of the Spheres forms a department of the Course of the Professor of Astronomy, of which he cannot be deprived, without great injustice to himself, and manifest injury to his Pupils. On one occasion, at least, we may hope to see each of the Professors cheerfully resigning a portion of his Patrimonial Interests and Vested Rights to promote the Weal and Harmony of the Community.

But to be again serious. The establishment of a separate Professorship of Clinical Medicine in the University, does not, it appears to me, comprehend all the improvement which this branch of the education afforded by the Medical School of Edinburgh, admits of, or requires. It is impossible for those who take an interest in the maintenance of the reputation of the Medical School of Edinburgh, to conceal from themselves the fact, that the greatest advantage, possessed by the rival schools of Medicine in the sister metropolises, as well as by some of those on the Continent, consists in the immense facilities for the practical study of their profession afforded to

Students of Medicine, by the numerous and extensive hospitals which these cities contain. The Medical School of Edinburgh, therefore, can ill afford to lose such opportunities of this kind as are within its reach. It can only be by the whole of its hospital being converted into a school of instruction, that it can hope to contend with rivals who are every day becoming more formidable. If, in addition to the comparatively greater facilities for dissection afforded in the schools of London and Dublin, these schools should, by a judicious system of Clinical Instruction, turn to the best account, the practical opportunities which they undoubtedly enjoy, whilst opportunities of this kind continue in Edinburgh to be as limited as they at present are, it cannot but happen that the Students of your University will resort to these schools for the study of Practical Medicine, as many of them now do for that of Practical Anatomy. Fortunately the conversion of each ward in an Hospital into a Clinical School, is not inconsistent with what the Managers of the Royal Infirmary have so justly stated to be the primary object of the Charitable Institution under their protection, "the right entertainment and cure of the sick poor brought into the Hospital." I had occasion, many years ago, in proposing a plan for the regulation of the Surgical Department of the Royal Infirmary, to remark, that, "as Clinical Lectures are, in an eminent degree, useful to students, so they are not less certainly, though indirectly, beneficial to the patients. If there be

any thing which can induce the rash practitioner to pause, the inconsiderate to reflect, or the ill informed to seek for instruction, it is the necessity of explaining the grounds of his practice, and his opinions of disease, to an audience collected from the students of this University."

In corroboration of this opinion, I have much pleasure in being able to quote the sentiments expressed by the late Dr Gregory.

" Nothing more than that kind of practice," he observes in his Additional Memorial, " most innocent with respect to the patients, and that kind of instruction most useful with respect to the Students, ever was intended by the Managers, in permitting the institution of Clinical Lectures, or understood or accepted by the Professors in discharging the duties of that important office.

" It would be absurd to set about proving that such Clinical Lectures cannot be injurious or dangerous ; but it is worth while to point out, as this may not be obvious to every person, that they cannot fail, every thing else being equal, to prove highly beneficial to the patients. It must not be considered as a reflection injurious to the ordinary Physicians of this or of any other Hospital, for I have no such thought, when I say that it would be for the benefit of patients, in Hospitals and not in Hospitals, if their Physicians were obliged to read Clinical Lectures on their cases.

I do not know, nor can I conceive, any human contrivance that can more effectually and irresistibly oblige the Physician to study carefully the case of his patient ; to attend to every symptom, or change of symptom, in it ; to exert himself to the utmost for his patient's relief, and, at the same time, to be as cautious as possible in the remedies that he employs ; than to find himself under the necessity of giving a minute account of every thing that he has done, in a very public manner, and before a number of competent judges. I do not mean to say, that such a system ever can be established, or that in general it is necessary, on account of the ignorance, laziness, indifference, negligence, or rashness of Physicians ; but I say, with confidence, that, if such a system were established, no patient could suffer by it, and many would profit greatly."

If, indeed, you advert to the necessary consequences of the system of Clinical Instruction at present pursued in the Infirmary, in relation to the comfort of the Patients ; to the crowding of the Students into particular Wards to such an extent as to render it a work of no small physical exertion for the most diligent Students to obtain even a glimpse of the ordinary Patients, and much more so of one whose case is regarded as peculiarly interesting ; to the fact that the Wards so crowded are those which contain Patients who have for the most part been selected on account of their complaints being of a highly aggravated description, rendering them the most liable to be injured by noise, and the

other accompaniments of a crowd ; and to the comparative desertion of the other Medical Wards, in which the Students, except the brief occasional reports dictated by the Physician to his Clerk, receive no instructions by which their observation or studies may be guided, you will acknowledge that the Patients would be greatly benefited by a system which should occasion a more equable diffusion of the students through the different wards of the Hospital.

If the Physicians of the Royal Infirmary were provided with Assistants who should relieve them of a share of their labours, and encouraged to deliver Courses of Clinical Lectures, the field of practical observation would be greatly widened to the Medical School of Edinburgh, and a reciprocity of interests and duties would be produced between the Physicians and the Students, which could not fail to prove highly beneficial to the latter ; whilst the admission of these Courses of Lectures by the Colleges of Surgeons, and the other public Medical Boards, as qualifying for examination before them, would secure their becoming a source of fair remuneration to the Physicians. And as the Infirmary would naturally become, what most continental Hospitals at present are, the source from which Professors would be chosen to teach the higher departments of Practical Medicine in the University, the Medical Officers of that establishment might look forward to the ultimate enjoyment of those peculiar and higher privileges which Universities reserve for their own Members.

I have now, Gentlemen, brought to a conclusion the observations which have occurred to me relative to two great defects which exist in the system of Medical Education at present pursued in your University ; and I have taken the liberty to suggest the measures by which, in my opinion, these defects may be best remedied, and your Medical School placed on a footing of equality with similar Institutions. The only apology I can make for the trouble which, on this and on former occasions, I have given you, is the warm interest which, as a Teacher of Medicine, I must ever feel in the reputation and prosperity of this School, whether my labours are exerted without or within the walls of the University. The time has been, when it might have been supposed that I had a personal interest in recommending the adoption of these measures ; but the ambition I long felt of obtaining a seat in the Medical Faculty I now resign to one who has been for some years the associate of my studies, and has become my Assistant in teaching the Practice of Physic. I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

JOHN THOMSON, M. D.,

*Late Regius Professor of Military Surgery in the
University of Edinburgh.*