

Remarks by the Professor of Surgery on a communication from the Senatus Academicus to the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of the City of Edinburgh, addressed to the College Committee / [John W. Turner].

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REMARKS by the PROFESSOR OF SURGERY, on a Communication from the Senatus Academicus to the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of the City of Edinburgh, addressed to the College Committee.

THE College Committee of the Magistrates and Council of the City of Edinburgh, the Honourable Patrons of the University, having directed the Communication of the Senatus Academicus, with regard to the late institution by the Crown of Professorships of General Pathology and of Surgery, to be communicated to me, with a request that I would transmit to the Committee my remarks thereon, so far as regards the Professorship of Surgery, I have now, in compliance with this request, most respectfully to submit the following observations for their consideration.

In the communication of the Senatus, and the Report of their Committee embodied in it, I observe that there are various statements and arguments which are applied equally to the Professorship of Pathology and to that of Surgery; and, having seen the observations of the Professor of Pathology on these topics, and entirely concurring with him in these observations, I consider it superfluous and unnecessary for me to occupy the time of the Committee by repeating them, but request to be permitted to refer to Dr THOMSON'S communication, as containing



my sentiments on these points, while I confine my remarks to the third section of the Report contained in the communication of the *Senatus Academicus*, which relates more particularly to the Professorship of Surgery.

I cannot but feel great satisfaction at finding that the *Senatus Academicus* are of opinion, that the foundation of a distinct Professorship of Surgery is expedient. At the same time it is impossible for me to allow, that it can with justice be alleged that this measure has been carried through, either in ignorance of, or with any disregard to, the rights or interests of the present Professor of Anatomy and Surgery. It is generally well known, that the institution of a separate Professorship of Surgery, and the addition of the class of Surgery to the course of study required of candidates for the degree of Doctor of Medicine, has been recommended by the Royal Commissioners for Visiting the Universities and Colleges of Scotland, and that this was done after a deliberate and careful investigation of the subject, on the almost unanimous testimony that it was necessary and proper, by the numerous eminent individuals of the Medical Profession, who were examined by the Commissioners, including the Professors of Medicine and Surgery in the University; and after a conjoint representation of the greater part of these Professors, that a separate Professorship of Surgery should be created, and the class added to the Curriculum of Medical Study. Previously, too, to making their report, the Royal Commissioners had been fully put in posses-

sion, by the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, of his objections to the institution of a Professorship of Surgery, on the ground of its interference with, what he conceived to be, his rights and interests; and I have reason to know, that, before the institution of the Professorship, and the appointment of a Professor of Surgery, a memorial on this subject, from the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, had been received and considered by His Majesty's Government.

I conceive that it will not be difficult to shew, that, in point of fact, the institution of a separate Professorship of Surgery does not interfere with the rights or interests of the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery. It must be observed that this Professor does not hold two commissions, one as Professor of Anatomy, and the other as Professor of Surgery; but that, in the year 1777, the Surgery was added by the Patrons of this University to the original commission of the Professor of Anatomy, and the two branches joined in one commission. This addition was made on the representation of the late Dr MONRO and the Medical Faculty, that the Anatomy and Surgery had been taught yearly in *one connected course* of Demonstrations and Lectures, comprehending Surgery with Anatomy; and it was done notwithstanding the opposition of the Royal College of Surgeons, who were desirous, even at that time, that a separate Professorship of Surgery should be established, and objected to the junction of the Surgery with the Anatomy, as I find from their Minutes, and from the

protest taken by their Deacon at a meeting of Council, on these grounds, besides others, that "to give a complete Course of Surgery would require more time than the Professor of Anatomy employed in both branches together;" and "that the said nomination can prove of no real benefit to the University, as it is certain that no man can teach both branches within the usual time employed in a course; nor can this Professor do more by this additional nomination than has already been done by him." It must therefore be obvious, that, by this commission, the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery is not required, and, as I conceive, is not entitled, to deliver two distinct and separate Courses on Anatomy and Surgery.

And here I beg to request the attention of the Committee to the passage in the communication from the Senatus Academicus, in which it is stated, that "they certainly could not have contemplated that this measure was to be carried through with an utter disregard of the circumstance, that an existing Professor has, for thirty-three years, held a commission from the Town Council, empowering him to teach Surgery, and has regularly delivered a Course of Lectures on that subject (in addition to his Lectures on Anatomy), to the same extent, as he believes, with the Courses delivered by any other Lecturer on Surgery here or elsewhere." In reference to this statement, which I must confess I did not read without surprise, I may remark, that it is notorious to the members of the Medical Profession in Edinburgh, and cannot, I conceive, be unknown

to most of the members of the *Senatus Academicus*, that for many years after the present Professor of Anatomy and Surgery received his commission, conjointly with his late father, the Lectures on Surgery were delivered for a month or six weeks at the end, and as a continuation of the Anatomical Course. In proof of this I may refer to a Memorial drawn up by the Medical Faculty, and presented by the *Senatus Academicus* to the Magistrates and Council, in the year 1806, on the occasion of the institution of the Professorship of Military Surgery, which contains various statements and arguments, for the purpose of demonstrating that the Professorship of Military Surgery, by its interference with that of Anatomy and Surgery, would produce consequences most injurious to the interests of the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, and to the Medical School of the University. I may take the liberty to remark in passing, that these statements and arguments, time and experience have shewn to be erroneous, and that they now only afford a proof that however peculiarly qualified the Members of the Medical Faculty may be conceived to be, to judge in all matters connected with the Medical Department of the University, it is not impossible that even they may be mistaken in their views on these subjects, and particularly in their anticipation of effects injurious to the interests of the members of their own body, or to those of the Medical School of the University, as being likely to result from the addition of any new branch of instruction. In this Memorial, in which the Medical Faculty maintained the same views as their

predecessors in 1777, it is asserted that "the department of Surgery has not suffered from the formal union of these two branches" (Anatomy and Surgery); and that the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery "delivers a full and complete Course of Surgery in its improved state;" and it is also stated, "that it has been the custom to conjoin in *one* person, and in *one course*, Anatomy and Surgery." It will be found, too, on consulting the advertisements of the Medical Classes of the University, published in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, that the Surgery was not advertised separately from the Anatomy till the year 1816, being eighteen years after the existing Professor of Anatomy and Surgery was appointed to the Chair.

But it is well known that even since this time, and till now, the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, in conducting his course, only professes to give one lecture weekly on Surgery during the first four months and a half of the anatomical part of the course, and afterwards to discontinue the anatomical lectures, and to deliver eight lectures weekly on Surgery; and although separate tickets are given for the Surgical Lectures, these are given without any additional fee to all the students of the anatomical class, a great proportion of whom are merely commencing their medical education, and therefore ill prepared to enter on the study of Surgery. The other courses of Surgery delivered in Edinburgh consist of at least five lectures weekly during the whole period of the winter session. From this statement, it must be obvious that the

Lectures on Surgery delivered by the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery cannot be regarded as “ a course of Lectures on Surgery, in addition to his Lectures on Anatomy ;” and notwithstanding his belief, sanctioned as it appears to be by the *Senatus Academicus*, they cannot be considered as a course of Surgery “ to the same extent with the courses delivered by any other lecturer on Surgery here or elsewhere;” but that they must be regarded as being merely conjoined with, or supplementary to, his anatomical course, and the greater part of them as being given at the expense of the time which might be devoted to the course of Anatomy. It will be found by a Minute of Council of the 7th November 1827, that, in a conference of a Committee of the Honourable Patrons, with the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, he stated that “ he considered the two branches of study to be so intimately connected that it would be improper to disjoin them ; that his lectures were all formed upon the principle of combining the study of them, and that he had always made Surgery form a prominent part of his lectures, and of his operations upon the subjects on which he lectured.” In support of the view I have taken, I may also refer to the fact, of which the *Senatus Academicus* cannot be ignorant, that the tickets or certificates of attendance on the Lectures on Surgery given by the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery have hitherto not been received by the Royal College of Surgeons as a qualification for examination of Candidates for the Surgical Diploma, on the sole ground that these lectures do not constitute a course equal in ex-

tent to what they consider necessary and require by their regulations, and such as is given by other Lecturers on Surgery in Edinburgh, and various other medical schools. I must confess that I cannot exactly comprehend why the Medical and Surgical Professors should, as is stated in the communication of the *Senatus Academicus*, have strongly recommended the institution of a Chair of Surgery as a most desirable object, if their impression of the nature and extent of the surgical lectures delivered by the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery had been the same as that which the statement in the passage I have quoted is calculated to convey; and that I find it difficult to reconcile this statement with the opinion which I have reason to believe has been deliberately expressed by one of these Professors, that "Surgery, for want of a separate Professorship, has never been fully taught in this University."

But whatever may be the nature, duration, or extent of the Lectures on Surgery delivered by the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, I am very much at a loss to understand in what manner the institution of a separate course of Lectures on Surgery in the University should prove injurious to his interests. His patent for teaching Surgery, it is obvious, is not a vendible commodity, which can be brought to market and disposed of to the highest bidder. Nor has the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery been accustomed to demand a separate fee for the lectures he has delivered on Surgery, even since he has been in the

habit of granting a separate ticket for this branch to those attending his course. To operate injuriously on his interests, therefore, the creation of a separate course of Surgery must, I conceive, be supposed to act in one of two ways, either by increasing the amount of his labours, or by diminishing the number of his students. I shall not make a supposition so injurious to the zeal of the present Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, as to imagine that any slight increase in the amount of his labours would induce him to oppose a measure calculated to improve the education of those receiving the degree of M. D. at this University. But, independently of this consideration, I am persuaded that he must find it a matter of much greater difficulty to condense the ordinary materials of a course of Lectures on Anatomy into the space at present allotted to them, than it would be for him to enter in a more elaborate manner than he can possibly do at present, into some of those departments of an anatomical course which students often experience peculiar difficulty in comprehending. The duty of teaching Surgery, it must also be kept in remembrance, is no inconsiderable task.

The supposition of the separate Professorship of Surgery causing an increase of labour to the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, obviously rests on the idea that he will not consider it necessary for him any longer to devote a portion of his course to the teaching of Surgery; but on this point he is left by the new commission to be guided entirely by his own discretion. I have next to

shew that, whatever may be his decision on this matter, whether he shall abandon or continue the teaching of Surgery, the new Professorship cannot act injuriously to his interests, by diminishing the number of his pupils.

That the union of Surgery with Anatomy, in the course of the Professor, does not tend to increase the number of his students, I think I am entitled to infer from the fact that none of the private lecturers on Anatomy attempt to conjoin Surgery with this branch in one course, as undoubtedly they would do, did they entertain any belief that the number of their pupils would thereby be increased.

But in the event of the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery resolving to continue to conjoin these two branches in one course, I do not see any change in the circumstances of his course, arising out of the new Professorship of Surgery, which would tend to diminish the number of his pupils. The students of the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery must consist partly of gentlemen intending to graduate, and partly of those intending to apply to other bodies for a license to practise the healing art. By the introduction of the course of the Professor of Surgery into the Medical Curriculum, an additional expense will undoubtedly be imposed on those who graduate, or, I should rather say, an additional *compulsory* expense will be imposed on them, for I am persuaded that few students have graduated at Edinburgh for a number of years back, who

had not voluntarily attended a separate course of lectures on Surgery. But the number of graduates attending the course of the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, and consequently the amount of fees received by him from that class of students, will not be diminished by this addition to the course of study. On those, again, who intend to take the diploma of the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the Surgery Ticket of the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery confers no privilege, the lectures which he has delivered on that branch never having been recognised by that body as a full and sufficient course, such as is required by their regulations. Indeed I have occasion to know that several members of the College entertain very serious doubts, whether the College ought to receive attendance on the lectures delivered by the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery in the University, as a sufficient course even of Anatomy of the extent required by their regulations, in consequence of the share of these lectures professedly devoted to an explanation of the Principles and Practice of Surgery; and other teachers have complained that the College thus allow the Professor of Anatomy to conduct his course of lectures on a plan which they would not sanction in a member of their own Body.

If, again, there be any Medical or Surgical Corporation which, contrary to the practice of the College of Surgeons, has been accustomed to receive attendance on the course of the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery as sufficient both for a course of Anatomy and a course of Surgery, the advantages enjoyed by the Professor of Anatomy and

Surgery, from such a practice, will in no respects be affected by the institution of a separate Professorship of Surgery. To all students, indeed, with the exception of graduates in the University, the new Professor of Surgery stands precisely in the same relation as he did when he held a commission as Professor of Surgery to the Royal College of Surgeons, or as any other member of that body who chooses to deliver a course of lectures of Surgery. There is therefore no change in the relative situation of the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery and the Professor of Surgery, so far as the class of students not intending to graduate is concerned, which can in any way operate injuriously to the interests of the former.

But the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, besides these two branches of medical instruction, professes to treat in his course, of Physiology, Pathology, and Comparative Anatomy. He undertakes, as part of his rights and duties, the superintendence of the class of Practical Anatomy. As a member of the Medical Faculty, he may lecture on Clinical Medicine; and he has been considered to have a right to deliver the lectures on Clinical Surgery, even to the exclusion of the Regius Professor of Clinical Surgery. It must therefore be sufficiently apparent that, were the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery to cease to deliver separate lectures on Surgery, the other branches which he professes or considers he has a right to teach, would afford him materials more than ample to occupy his whole time fully and profitably to himself and his pupils.

And further, I may remark, every one conversant with the science of Medicine must be aware that the branch of human anatomy, general and descriptive, with the requisite demonstrations and illustrations, is, from its importance and extent, of itself sufficient to occupy completely the whole period of a six months' course of lectures; and a belief is very generally entertained by the members of the medical profession here, of the correctness of which I conceive there can be no doubt, that if the present Professor of Anatomy and Surgery were to devote his well known talents, and the whole time of his course, to lecturing on Anatomy alone, and to a general superintendence of the class of Practical Anatomy, merely introducing such remarks on surgery and the other branches he at present professes to teach, as may serve to illustrate the demonstrations and disquisitions in which he may be engaged, he could not fail to raise the value of his course in the estimation of the profession and of the students, and to add to his own reputation and emolument, as well as to increase the celebrity of the University as a medical school. On this subject, I cannot do better, I conceive, than quote the following passage from a printed pamphlet by Dr THOMSON, addressed to the Patrons and Professors of the University in 1826.

“ 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 numerously 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 numerously 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."

That the subject of Anatomy alone is sufficient to occupy the whole period of a six months' course of lectures, has been proved by experience; for the late Drs Barclay and Gordon, and Dr William Cullen, besides other private lecturers, who have taught anatomy in Edinburgh, with distinguished zeal and success, employed the whole time of the winter session in lecturing on this branch; and I know that some of them have found it difficult to embrace all its details even in this period. I may add, I believe it will be found, that various individuals, among whom were several of the Medical Professors of the University, have, in the evidence they gave before the Royal Commissioners, expressed their opinions that one of the advantages of the institution of a separate Professorship of Surgery, would be, that of enabling the Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, to extend his course of Anatomy so as to occupy the whole of the session of six months, and thus to render it more efficient and complete.

I do not pretend to understand the exact meaning the Committee of the Senatus who drew the report intend to convey, by that passage of their communication in which they assert that the appointment of the Professor of Surgery was carried through without time or opportunity having been afforded for a fair competition among the candidates for the office; nor do I presume to judge with regard to the notice His Majesty's Government may consider it advisable to give, or the opportunity of competition they may judge it right to afford, in making appoint-

ments of Regius Professors, and particularly in the institution of new Professorships in the University of Edinburgh; nor shall I inquire what has been the practice in these respects on former occasions in the nomination of Professors by the Crown.

But, with regard to the present instance, I may state, that, since the junction of Surgery with Anatomy in one commission, which took place in 1777, the attention of the Honourable Patrons has been repeatedly directed to the consideration of the propriety of separating these two branches, and instituting a separate Professorship of Surgery. I know that this was the case at the time of the demise of the late Dr MONRO, and that it was again done on the occasion of the vacancy in the Botanical Professorship, on the death of Professor RUTHERFORD in 1819; and, in the year 1827, the attention of the Honourable Patrons having been again directed to the subject, it appears from the records of the Town-Council, that, on 7th February of that year, they formally remitted to the College Committee to inquire and report as to the propriety of separating the teaching of Surgery from that of Anatomy.

That Committee having carefully considered this important subject, reported to the Council on the 4th of September of the same year, as their opinion, *inter alia*, "That Anatomy and Surgery each afford ample employment for a separate Professor, and that the conjunction of these two important branches must be injurious

to the usefulness of the Teacher, the interests of the Students, and the advancement of Medical Science ;” and, further, “that Anatomy, as the basis of medical knowledge, requires the undivided attention of its Professor or Teacher ; and that it is not less apparent that Surgery, from its extent and importance as a branch of Medical Science, demands a full and separate course of instruction.” The Committee further reported, “that they would have deemed it their duty to have recommended the immediate separation of the Teaching of Surgery from that of Anatomy, and the erection of a separate Professorship of Surgery in the University, had there been no ambiguity in the import of the commission granted to the present Professor of Anatomy.”

On the 12th September the Magistrates and Council having resumed the consideration of this report, approved of the same, and, according to a recommendation contained in it, resolved that, “as Patrons of the University, and deeply interested in its welfare and public utility, they will avail themselves of the first opportunity that offers itself to disjoin the class of Anatomy from that of Surgery, and to erect a Professorship of Surgery in the University,” and appointed a Committee to confer with Dr MONRO on the subject. Accordingly a conference and a correspondence took place between this Committee and Dr MONRO, the particulars of which are preserved in the records of the Town Council ; but in consequence, as I suppose, of the Committee finding that Dr MONRO did not

seem disposed to concur in the views of the Council, no further steps were taken in the business at that time.

At a later period, in consequence of what transpired of the proceedings of the Royal Commissioners, and of the opinions they had received in evidence with regard to the advantages of Surgery being taught in the University in a full and separate course of lectures, it was generally believed that they would recommend in their report that a separate Professorship of Surgery should be created. It is obvious, therefore, that it must have been well understood amongst those interested in the matter that a Professorship of Surgery would be instituted at no distant period, though it was not known whether this would be done by the Crown or by the Magistrates and Council as Patrons of the University, and I may add, that I have reason to believe that on this impression more than one of the individuals who were desirous to be appointed to fill that office, were employed in taking measures which they thought might be likely to assist them in attaining their object.

It must be well known to the Committee, that, for some time before the new Professorship was instituted by the Crown, it was currently and publicly reported in Edinburgh that this was immediately to take place, or even that it had been already effected; and that, before the appointment was made, and, as I have reason to know, before the measure was determined on by his Majesty's Government,

two gentlemen besides myself had made applications, and stated their claims to his Majesty's advisers to be appointed Professor of Surgery, and that four had done the same to the Magistrates and Council, and that a canvass of the individual members of that body had taken place.

I leave it to the Committee to judge from the statement I have now made, whether the creation of a Professorship of Surgery could be regarded as an unexpected event, whether time and opportunity were not afforded for a competition among the candidates for the office, and whether such a competition did not actually take place. I shall only add, that, from various circumstances which have come to my knowledge, I am satisfied that, had any delay taken place in the appointment by the Crown, it would have been at the risk of his Majesty's Government being defeated in their intentions of erecting a Professorship of Surgery, and making a nomination of a Professor, and without any security that more time or opportunity would have been afforded for a fair competition among candidates for the office.

In conclusion, I have to remark that I do not see any good grounds why the *Senatus Academicus* should anticipate that they are to be thrown into any embarrassment as to the manner in which attendance on a course of Surgery should be required of candidates for the Doctorship. All that appears to me to be necessary is, that the class of Surgery should be added to the Medical Curriculum, ac-

ording to the right or privilege, as I conceive, conferred by the terms of the Commission I have the honour to hold as Professor of Surgery, and according to what I know were the intentions of his Majesty's Government in instituting the Professorship of Surgery, as had been recommended in the report of the Royal Commissioners for visiting the Universities and Colleges of Scotland.

(Signed) JOHN W. TURNER,

Regius Professor of Surgery.

EDINBURGH, Nov. 1, 1831.