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PROFESSORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

RELATIVE TO THE

CHAIR OF GENERAL PATHOLOGY:

REPRINTED

"*VERBATIM ET LITERATIM*,"

FROM THE

PUBLIC JOURNALS OF EDINBURGH,

IN WHICH THEY APPEARED IN

SEPTEMBER 1841.

EDINBURGH:

THOMAS PATON, NORTH-WEST CIRCUS PLACE,
AND ADAM & CHARLES BLACK.

MDCCCXLI.

LETTERS.

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LETTERS.

FROM THE *ADVERTISER* OF THE 17TH, AND FROM THE *SCOTSMAN* OF
THE 18TH SEPTEMBER.

SIR

I have addressed the following letter to the Editor of the *Scotsman*. As I presume the report in question will also appear in your paper, may I request you will either take the trouble to introduce the necessary correction in any way you consider most suitable, or that you will do my colleagues and myself the favour of inserting the letter.

I am, your obedient Servant,

R. CHRISTISON.

15th September, 1841.

SIR,—In the report in this day's *Scotsman* of the proceedings of the Town Council relative to the Chair of General Pathology, Mr Black is stated to have said, as to the question whether the Chair ought to be abolished or not,—“Certain it was that the Medical Faculty were greatly divided upon this point themselves; but the fact was, that there was no set of men more apt to divide in opinion, and who were more virulent in their opposition, than medical men generally.”

On a question of such consequence to the University, it is desirable that no misconception should arise as to important matters of fact. I am far from supposing that Mr Black was aware that the natural meaning to be attached to these expressions was so much at variance with the fact. But in my position in the University I feel called on to observe, that in 1837, on the occasion of Dr Thomson's former proposal to resign, the Medical Faculty of the University, which can be the only body here referred to, as distinct from “medical men generally,” presented to the Town Council a representation signed by its whole members, twelve in number, (exclusive of Dr Thomson), expressing their sentiments, that the Chair was unnecessary and ought to be abolished; and I know that every member of the Faculty at that period, who is still in the body—and only one vacancy has occurred since then—still retains the same opinion.

The insertion of this correction will confer a favour on my colleagues and myself.—I am, your obedient servant,

R. CHRISTISON,

Dean of the Medical Faculty.

15th September, 1841.

To the Editor of the *Scotsman*.

FROM THE *SCOTSMAN* OF THE 18TH SEPTEMBER.

Thursday Morning, Sept. 16, 1841.

DEAR SIR,

I sit down to furnish you with the notes that you wish for with regard to the propriety of the Pathology Chair. I am sorry that I have not done so sooner, and at greater length than I can now accomplish in time for your meeting of the College Committee this forenoon. The pith of the question, however, appears to me to lie within very narrow limits. I will endeavour to state it as concisely as I can.

First of all, it must, in your enquiry, be prominently and constantly recollected, that the Chair of the Institutes and Theory of Medicine, as taught for the last hundred years in our University, has always comprised three separate subjects or departments—viz.

1. *Physiology*, or the general doctrines of health.
2. *Pathology*, or the general doctrines of disease; and
3. *Therapeutics*, or the general doctrines of cure.

Each of these subjects has been immensely extended by the march of discovery and improvement in modern times; and to obtain great eminence in the pursuit and advancement of any one of them now-a-days, requires a man's sole and undivided attention. Most of our greatest Physiologists, for example, are in no degree eminent as Pathologists or Physicians.

Dr Alison, the present distinguished Professor of the Institutes, is in sober reality a giant of a lecturer, both as regards quality and quantity of matter. Yet it is a public fact that even he has of late years not been able to overtake the different departments of his enormous and mixed course. In fact, the first of the departments that I have named—Physiology—very properly occupies the whole, or nearly the whole, of the time of his academic session; and in other schools, as in the University College, London, &c. a period of six months is (as it certainly ought to be) laid out for that single branch alone. For some years past, Dr Alison has not, from simple want of time, been able to give any lectures on General Therapeutics, though I know he has an admirable course written out on that subject. I mention this, not to blame Dr Alison for the omission (nothing could be further from my thoughts). I mention it merely to shew that, by the omission of this most important part of his course, Dr Alison virtually confesses that his class-subjects are distinctly too lengthened and unwieldy for a single lecturer. Hence the necessary, and, for the University pupils, most unfortunate result, that for the present the teaching with him of General Therapeutics is in abeyance; or, if you prefer the term used by my medical colleagues, it is in the meantime, from the unavoidable length of the Physiology, *abolished*.

Now, the question that you are to discuss to-day is this—Should the Patrons *abolish* also the Pathology—that which was taught, for a long series of years, by Whytt, Cullen, Duncan, and others, as a separate department of the Institutes; and which, in 1831, was erected into a separate Professorship? Before doing so, it appears to me incumbent on the opponents to the chair to prove, in defiance of the general opinion of the medical world, that medical science has retrograded and not progressed during the last century; and that Pathology, instead of having increased more within the last thirty or forty years than any other branch of professional knowledge, has actually dwindled down in extent and importance. That the reverse of this is strongly the case, no medical man will, I believe, even venture to deny. The great modern advancement of Pathological science is sufficiently proclaimed by the fact, that Professorships upon it have been instituted in many continental schools; and that attendance upon Pathology, as distinct from the practices of Physic and Surgery, is as imperatively required as Anatomy, Chemistry, or any other medical-faculty class, in the

Universities of Austria, Holland, Bavaria, and in the two French Universities of Paris and Strasbourg. There and elsewhere Professorships and Lectureships have been established either upon General Pathology as a whole, or even, as in many cases, separate Lectureships on the separate subdivision of it. To understand this last statement, allow me to mention, that General Pathology, as taught by Dr Thomson, comprised, as four of its principal subdivisions or departments—

1. *Pathogeny*; or the general doctrines of the nature, differences, and seats of diseases.

2. *Etiology*; Hygiene; or the general doctrines of their exciting causes.

3. *Semeiotics*; or the general doctrines of symptoms; and

4. *Morbid Anatomy*; or the organic causes, course, and effects, as ascertained by dissection.

Now, in some continental Universities there are separate courses of lectures delivered on each of these four departments; while by the opponents to the Chair here, it has been argued that the four taken and taught together (as was done by Dr Thomson in his lectures), were not sufficient to make one proper course, and that the one course at present in existence should be abolished! In other continental schools, the two first departments of General Pathology, or the first and third, are taught together, making thus three Courses or three Professorships, of what in our University constitutes the presently debated one Professorship. The subject is in this last way divided in the University of Paris into three separate Chairs, viz.:—1. Those of General Pathology, held by Andral; 2. Morbid, or Pathological Anatomy, held by Cruveilhier; and, 3. Hygiene, or Etiology, held by Royer-Collard. In other Universities, again, the subject is comprised in two distinct courses. Thus, in the sixteen Courses of Medical Instruction, laid down by the University of London, we have "General Pathology and Pathological Anatomy," and "Hygiene," or Etiology, as two separate courses. In University College, London, there has existed for several years a Professorship of Morbid Anatomy. The tickets of Dr Carsewell, who till lately held that Professorship, have, in more than one instance, been received by our Medical Faculty here as equivalent to the tickets of our Professor of General Pathology. Further, separate and distinct lectureships on Morbid Anatomy, similar to Dr Carsewell's—and hence, I beg you to recollect, similar to what has been officially recognised in some cases by my medical Colleagues in our University as equivalent to our General Pathology—have lately been established in several of the smaller medical schools in London, as in those connected with the hospitals of St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas', Charing-Cross, and perhaps others with which I am unacquainted.

To sum up this part of the question—no man is now able to overtake all the subjects formerly allotted to the Professor of the Institutes; and one of two things must follow, viz., either the Course must be kept divided as at present between two Professorships; or the Pathology, which has been taught as a separate department of the Institutes for a hundred years back, and as a separate Chair for the last ten years, must be abolished, and that at a time when the increased and increasing importance of the subject is shewn by lectureships on it, or on one or more of its individual branches, springing up everywhere over the Continent, and in the public, nay, even in the private medical schools of London. Is this a fit time for the University of Edinburgh—the first medical school in Europe, as it has been termed—to take such a retrograde step as would sink it in this branch of science below some of the smallest hospital schools of the metropolis.

The Chair may possibly, in the meantime (in consequence of the extraordinary efforts used and using against it) be repressed and abolished; but it requires no sagacity to predict, that ere long it must inevitably come to be re-established, unless indeed, by the same edict, the pursuit and extension of Medical and Pathological knowledge over the world could be repressed and abolished also, and all that has been done and gained and written on

Physiology, Pathology, and Therapeutics, during the last half century, be at once and deliberately wiped out. Unless some most extraordinary change takes place in the human mind and its workings, medical science must progress, and will swell out so much in individual parts as to require either the Crown or the Patrons to force from time to time upon the University an addition to the number of the chairs and lectureships. These additions may (as several of the past have been) be denounced as *jobs*, but they are jobs perpetrated by the advancement of science.

It has been averred by some medical men that General Pathology is taught in the Courses of Practice of Physic and Surgery. I do not think it necessary to take up your time by shewing that this is an utter and most ridiculous misconception. The programmes of the division of lectures in the London University, or in any of the foreign ones, by entering these three as *perfectly* separate subjects, distinctly point out how very opposite an opinion they entertain. But even allowing the allegation for the sake of argument to be true, it still only requires to be added that the Courses of Physic and Surgery in our University, are already so greatly overloaded, that the distinguished Professors who conduct them have not for years been able to overtake and lecture upon all the *practical* topics connected with their subjects.

The Pathology Chair has been occasionally cried down, as peculiarly oppressive in the way of adding to the number of classes, and thus adding to the expenses of the candidate for graduation. This argument has, I believe, been much insisted upon by some of my medical colleagues in the University. The answer is so plain and simple as to admit of no equivocation. The Pathology Chair was instituted in 1831. In 1833 my medical colleagues voluntarily added—1. Natural History; 2. Practical Anatomy; 3. Medical Jurisprudence; and 4. Clinical Surgery, to that list of imperative classes which they *now* allege to have been *already* too oppressive from its containing the Pathology. Besides, it is a well-known fact that, as stated by Dr Alison, “while the courses enumerated in the statutes of the University are only fourteen, the average actual attendance of each candidate (setting aside the Pathology), is *twenty* courses.” And surely if General Pathology possesses any value at all, it is not “peculiarly oppressive,” that *one* out of these six or seven supernumerary courses, should be the course of Pathology in question.

Again, it has been alleged that the existence of General Pathology in the curriculum has diminished the number of students and graduates at Edinburgh, and increased those of Glasgow. If this were strictly true, why not suspect the more lately superadded class of Natural History, or of Practical Anatomy, or of Clinical Surgery (none of which are in the Glasgow curriculum), as much, or, taking them conjointly, even more than the Pathology. But the number of the Glasgow students has not been increased, though that of their graduates has been; and most of my medical colleagues know abundantly well the *secret* of the increase of the latter to be simply this—that while we have hitherto peremptorily refused in Edinburgh to give our degree to any pupil who has not studied *three* years at least in a University, the medical faculty of Glasgow grant their degree to pupils who have only studied *one* year in a University. Hence, young men who have attended the necessary professional classes in the private medical schools of London and Dublin, may, it can be easily seen, prefer a degree that can be obtained by *one* year's additional study, to another that can only be obtained by *three*.

Let me only add one or two observations more. I would beg you to remember that the diploma or degree conferred by our University is that of *physician* and not of *surgeon*. Yet, in the examination for our degree, *three* Professors of Surgery are concerned (Professors Ballingall, Bell, and Syme), and, if the Pathology Chair be abolished, only *one* Professor of Physic, properly so speaking (Dr Home). Would not that be a strange anomaly in such an examining board? Further, the Navy Board requires two six

months' courses of practice of Physic from all candidates for the situation of even assistant-surgeon to the navy; the Army Board requires the same—but both of them now accept six months of practice of Physic and six of Pathology as equivalent; the Apothecaries' Hall, London, exacts two courses of six months of practice of Physic. Now, if the Pathology be abolished, our graduates will be reduced to the level of six months' study only of the nature of medical diseases and the principles and practice of Physic. But, for one, I earnestly and confidently hope that the Patrons of the University (however much they may extend or enhance our course of instruction) will never suffer the attention to the principles and practice of Physic imperatively required for our diploma as a *physician*, to be degraded below the standards imperatively required on the same subjects, for an assistant-surgeon in the army or navy, or for a mere English apothecary.

Lastly, you ask me why, "if the Pathology be really so very valuable and important, the Medical Faculty oppose it so vehemently, and formerly sent in an unanimous document to the Patrons asking for its abolition?" I will be able to answer the first part of the question when any one fully unveils to the world the reasons which prompted the same body, at successive periods, and with similar vehemence to oppose the creation of the Professorships of Surgery, Clinical Surgery, Military Surgery, and Medical Jurisprudence, and the addition of Midwifery to their curriculum. The document you refer to, petitioning for the abolition of the Pathology Chair, was signed by 12 out of the 14 Professors belonging at that time (1837) to the Medical faculty.* I believe that different considerations weighed with different members in signing and presenting it to the Patrons. My late predecessor, Dr Hamilton, ingenuously told me, and he told the same to others, that he, for his part, signed that strong and solemn requisition for the entire abolition of the Pathology Chair in order thus to keep a particular gentleman, who was then a candidate for that Chair, out of the University.

I have the honour to remain,

Yours very faithfully,

J. Y. SIMPSON,
Professor of Midwifery

To Councillor BANKS.

* Professors Jameson and Thomson formed the two exceptions.

FROM THE *SCOTSMAN* OF THE 22D SEPTEMBER.

SIR,

You have been called on by the Professor of Midwifery to admit into your newspaper a long argument by him in favour of the maintenance of the Chair of General Pathology in the University. If his colleagues—whose sentiments, with the exception of his alone, I represent on the present occasion—decline to accept the challenge thus given to them, I beg it may be understood that this arises, not from any acknowledgment of the authenticity of the facts or force of the arguments he has brought forward, and as little from any want of respect for the medium he has chosen for conveying them, but simply from the impossibility of discovering what good purpose will be served by such a controversy upon such a field, when the Patrons of the University, as he very well knows, have determined to delay their proceedings till they can inform themselves better as to the facts, and give ample opportunity, as well to the Professor of Midwifery as to his colleagues, of communicating their sentiments both in writing and by personal conference.

Lest his unanswered letter, however, should lead to the question being prejudged in any important quarter, I have to observe, on behalf of the other members of the Faculty of Medicine, that it will be shewn by them to the Patrons, that the parallel attempted to be drawn between the Edinburgh Chair and others existing in foreign Universities has no existence, inasmuch as the Medical Chairs there are differently constituted in relation to one another, the expenses of medical students different, and the general scope of medical education scarcely less different, and unsuited to the demands of the public in this country. It will be also shewn, why it is that the imperative attendance of candidates for the degree of M.D. on General Pathology has been considered by the Faculty of Medicine, as well as candidates themselves, to be oppressive. And it will be shewn, not merely that this subject is otherwise taught in the University of Edinburgh, but likewise that it cannot with advantage be detached from the Chairs in which it is taught.

In simple defence of my colleagues and myself, but without any view now to argue the question, I must trespass a little more on your indulgence by adverting to two statements in the letter, affecting—to use no stronger terms—the trust-worthiness of our opinions on the present question.

The Professor of Midwifery, in reply to a question by the gentleman whom he addresses—Why the Medical Faculty, on a late occasion, unanimously requested the Patrons to abolish the Chair—hints that the reasons may be of the same kind (of what kind he does not positively say, leaving his readers to infer that they could not have been very creditable) with those which led “the same body” to oppose the foundation of the Professorships of Surgery, Clinical Surgery, Military Surgery, and Medical Jurisprudence, and the enforcement of attendance upon Midwifery as necessary for graduation. That the Professor, before leaving the public to form their own conclusions from this insinuation, ought to have weighed well how false and injurious an inference would be naturally drawn from his words, will, it is hoped, be seen by your readers, when they are told,—That the Chairs of Clinical Surgery, Military Surgery, and Medical Jurisprudence, were founded so long ago as 1803, 1806, and 1807, when “this same body” contained only three of its existing thirteen members; so that an overwhelming majority of them never had occasion to express any Faculty or other public opinion on the matter;—that the Faculty, though they certainly remonstrated against what they conceived to be the unfair mode of filling up the Chair of Surgery on its first creation, never did oppose its foundation, as your correspondent alleges, but on the contrary, had individually

(with, I believe, one exception) represented some years before to the Royal University Commission the propriety of establishing such a Chair;—and that, in 1824, the enforcement of Midwifery as necessary for graduation, rejected, as it undoubtedly was, by the *Senatus Academicus* some nine years previously, was recommended by every medical Professor without exception, and passed by the *Senatus*—quite irrespective of the interference of the Patrons, to which, it is to be presumed, the present Professor of Midwifery desires to ascribe its adoption. With what consistency he can taunt the Faculty of the present day with opposing the foundation or encouragement of these Chairs,—which they in reality never did oppose,—and in the same breath twit them with having had eight years ago the liberality to add, as he represents, four, but, in point of fact, two classes to the curriculum of study for graduation,—and what point the last admitted fact gives to his argument against the credibility of his brethren's unfavourable testimony respecting the Professorship of General Pathology,—I must leave to your readers to discover.

One word more and I have done. The Professor of Midwifery also endeavours to weaken this testimony of his colleagues, by asserting that Dr Hamilton, one of the unanimous Faculty on a former occasion when the Patrons were requested to suppress the Pathology Chair on the ground of its being superfluous, confessed to him that he signed “the strong and solemn” requisition of the Faculty, not for the reason assigned in it, but really to exclude from the University a particular candidate, who might perchance have succeeded Dr Thomson, had the Chair been vacated and filled up. Let the public, whom he addresses, judge whether Dr Simpson be justified in imputing so unworthy a motive and such discreditable conduct to his deceased predecessor, and upon the authority of his recollection of a casual, perhaps hasty, conversation. My proper business is with the inference which his readers are left to draw from the statement. Yet I feel bound, in justice to the memory of Dr Hamilton, to observe in passing, that the sentiments now imputed to him are not those avowed by himself to his colleagues, when he joined them in their representation. The inference to which I allude is, that, Dr Hamilton having acted thus, others of the Faculty of Medicine may have acted so likewise, both then and now. If, as I believe to be the case, the Professor of Midwifery had no intention to suggest this suspicion or charge, to the minds of his readers, he was bound not to relate his story without expressly protecting his colleagues against a conclusion from it at once so obvious, and, if false, so injurious. Since he has not done so, I must supply the omission as far as lies in my power, by stating on behalf of my colleagues as well as myself, that the inference is wholly without foundation.

I have to express my regret, that in my letter which appeared in Saturday's *Scotsman* an inaccuracy exists, in consequence of my not having been able at the time to obtain access to the document referred to. The representation was not signed by every member of the Medical Faculty exclusive of the Professor of General Pathology himself; for Professor Jameson's name does not appear at the document. My error may easily be accounted for, and perhaps excused; since the want of his signature did not arise from any want of concordance with the sentiments of his colleagues.—I am, &c.

R. CHRISTISON.

Randolph Crescent, September 20.

FROM THE *SCOTSMAN* OF THE 25TH SEPTEMBER.

SIR,

In Dr Christison's letter inserted in your paper of Wednesday last, there are two points on which I beg the favour of being allowed to offer a few observations, as their tendency seems to be to ascribe to me disingenuous statements on some of the topics at present under discussion before the Patrons of the University.

Before, however, proceeding to notice these, I beg to state that my letter, which appeared in your paper of Saturday the 18th instant, was not originally intended for publication; and that on being induced to publish it by the appearance of Dr Christison's letter in the *Advertiser* of the preceding day (the 17th), I added to it, before doing so, the paragraph presently to be more particularly noticed, as containing a reference to my late predecessor.

1st, Dr Christison attributes great blame to me for having represented the Medical Faculty, which on a late occasion unanimously requested the Patrons to abolish the Chair of General Pathology, as "the same body" which opposed the foundation of certain other Professorships, seeing that some of these "were founded so long ago as 1803, 1806, and 1807, when this same body contained only three of its existing thirteen members; so that an overwhelming majority of them never had occasion to express any Faculty or other public opinion on the matter." I have always understood that the term "body," as used by me on the occasion referred to, implied not the *individual members*, who are subject to decay and death, but the ideal Corporation or Faculty, which never decays and never dies. The French expression *esprit de corps* seems to me both to confirm my notion on this point, and to illustrate the meaning of my suggestion, that probably the same motives had influenced this "same body" on the several occasions to which I alluded. I deem it the less necessary, however, to dwell on this topic, that I find myself anticipated in the postscript to a letter which has appeared in this morning's *Observer* from the pen of a distinguished Alumnus of the University, and from which I shall take the liberty to quote the following passage:—

"I humbly conceive that the *body* has continued the same, whatever change may have occurred in the *individuals* composing it; not only the same in name—but, to judge from the analogy of sentiment and reasoning, the same unfortunately in spirit. I have no doubt that the time will come when the successors of the present members of the Medical Faculty will be as anxious to disavow their identity with the body which so vehemently opposed the Chair of General Pathology, as they themselves are to establish that they are not the same body which opposed the separation of Surgery from Anatomy in 1777; which opposed the erection of a Chair of Medical Jurisprudence in 1798; which resisted, as long as it could, the institution of a Chair of Clinical Surgery in 1803; and, when they found it at length necessary to succumb, caused the commission of the Professor to be clogged with a futile but insulting proviso; which resisted the institution of the Chair of Military Surgery in 1806; and which, in 1815, gave the go-bye to Dr Hamilton's application to have the Midwifery Class added to the Medical Curriculum."

2dly, Dr Christison bestows much virtuous indignation upon me for having mentioned that my late predecessor informed me that he was induced to sign the requisition for the abolition of the Pathology Chair from the apprehension of its being conferred on a particular individual. As I stated in my previous letter, it was not to me alone that Dr Hamilton made this avowal. I can give Dr Christison the names of at least two gentlemen standing at the head of the profession in Edinburgh, to whom Dr Hamilton repeated the same statement: and I infer, from the freedom with which he avowed the fact, that Dr H. did not consider "his motive unworthy, or his conduct discreditable." At all events, I stand forward neither as his ac-

cuser nor as his defender, in reference to the present matter; but of this Dr Christison may be assured, that it is not to the Medical Faculty of the University that Dr Hamilton's friends will look for any vindication of his character or conduct. I should never certainly have alluded publicly to the fact, but for Dr Christison's public statement in the *Advertiser* of the preceding day respecting the *unanimity* in opinion of the Medical Faculty on the abolition of the Pathology Chair; and I even now suppress a portion of Dr Hamilton's communication to me as resting solely, as far as I am yet aware, upon his conversation with myself in relation to the subject.

With regard to Dr Christison's doubts as to the authenticity of the statements made by me, as more immediately bearing upon the point at issue, I have merely to say, that the various documents necessary for the corroboration of each of these statements are now in the hands of the College Committee of the Patrons. Amongst these documents are two—and I allude to these two at present specially, merely because Dr Christison has, in your columns, specially animadverted upon the subjects to which they refer—the first, consisting of extracts from the minutes of the *Senatus Academicus*, shewing that, 1. Clinical Surgery, 2. Medical Jurisprudence, 3. Natural History, and 4. Practical Anatomy, were at different periods, during the year 1833, "added to the list of imperative classes" in our University; and the second, a document proving that General Pathology is taught and looked upon in the German Universities as an *imperative* class, in the strictest sense of the word.

I am, &c.

J. Y. SIMPSON.

22, Albany Street, September 24, 1841.

FROM THE *OBSERVER* OF THE 24TH SEPTEMBER.

SIR,

In the determination of the question relative to the expediency of retaining or of abolishing the Chair of General Pathology in the University of Edinburgh, which is at present under the consideration of the Town Council, much reliance is placed by the advocates of abolition on the opinion of the *Medical Faculty*—understanding, by that term, the Medical Professors in the University. But before according this reliance, it appears to me that it would be prudent to inquire whether, on other occasions, that body have shewn themselves the friends or the opponents of improvement; whether, availing themselves of the high reputation which the University of Edinburgh has so long enjoyed as a School of Medicine, they have been the foremost to make those extensions of the system of medical education, which the advancement of medical science has called for; or whether they have been content to lag behind other bodies, which, though not enjoying the same reputation, have been less timorous in making additions to the course of study required of candidates for their licenses. If we are to trust to the accounts which the members of the Medical Faculty themselves give of the proceedings of that body, nothing can be more meritorious. Dr Alison, in his letter to the Patrons of the University, on the Pathology Chair, dated 1837, says:—

" Since I became a member of the Medical Faculty in 1821, the term of study for the graduates in Medicine has been extended from three years to four; the length of Hospital attendance imperative on them has been doubled, and either apprenticeship, or other means of acquiring practical information, has been enforced; independently of the Chair of Pathology, the number of courses of lectures required of them has been extended from seven to thirteen,—(viz., by the addition of the Practical Anatomy, Midwifery, Surgery, Clinical Surgery, Medical Jurisprudence, and Natural History); the number of Professors entitled to examine these candidates has been raised from six to twelve; and while, in consequence of these changes increasing the burdens on the graduates, the number, both of students and of graduates, has been diminished, the number of Professors entitled to share the graduation fees has been doubled, and the share thereof falling to each of the Chairs formerly existing in the Faculty been reduced to one half.

" Now, every one of these changes has been made by the *Senatus Academicus*. They have been made at three different times, and there have been differences of opinion as to the time when several of them should take effect, but each of them has been supported by the whole, or by a majority of the medical faculty existing at the time when it was resolved upon. I can say for myself, that I have zealously supported every one of them; and I shall only add, that if, in the face of these notorious facts, any man believes that the Medical Faculty have, 'on all occasions, shewn great unwillingness to extend the course of study of the candidates for their degrees, and are guided by their pecuniary interests in the limitation of their number,'—I am afraid that he will retain his belief although we were to come to an unanimous vote in favour of the continuance of an imperative course of General Pathology."

I should be very sorry to think that I was blind to the merits of the Medical Faculty, or of any other set of men, in this or in any other matter; but I cannot conscientiously acknowledge that the Medical Faculty are entitled to the merit which Dr Alison claims for them. That the additions to the curriculum which he mentions, have been made, is unquestionable; but an investigation of the circumstances in which they have been made will shew that the Medical Faculty have been by no means the leaders or active movers in the reform that has been effected.

It appears to have been in 1767 that a curriculum or course of study for those desirous to obtain medical degrees, was first introduced into the University of Edinburgh. By the second statute of that curriculum, it was provided that the student, before being admitted a candidate, should have gone through, in this or some other University, a course of study in all branches of medical science. Some doubt having arisen as to what was implied by this last phrase, it was in 1777 declared to comprehend Anatomy and Surgery, Chemistry, Botany, *Materia Medica* and Pharmacy, Theory of Medicine, Practice of Medicine, and Clinical Lectures. In 1783, the length of the course of study was fixed at three complete years, and it was announced to be *expected* of candidates that they should attend the University of Edinburgh at least one of these years.

Though various changes were made in the interval between 1783 and 1824, in the less important regulations relative to Medical Graduation, the course of education prescribed continued through that long period without any change. Various events, however, took place, in the interval, in the University, in which the Medical School was materially interested, to which I may perhaps take another opportunity to advert,—such as the opposition the Medical Faculty made, in 1777, to the proposed establishment of a separate Professorship of Surgery; in 1798, to that of a separate Chair of Medical Jurisprudence; and in 1806 to that of a Chair of Military Surgery; as well as the restrictions and limitations which, in 1803, they caused to be introduced into the commission of the Professor of Clinical Surgery; and the supercilious manner in which, in 1815, they treated the application of the

Professor of Midwifery to be admitted a member of the Medical Faculty. In these portions of the history of the Medical Faculty of the University of Edinburgh, is contained abundant evidence that alterations in the system of medical education, which every one now acknowledges to have been improvements, have been, on their first proposal, condemned and opposed by that body as resolutely as the one now under consideration.

The first change in the curriculum of medical study, subsequently to Dr Alison's becoming a member of the Medical Faculty in 1821, was made previously to the opening of the winter session of 1823-4, when it was enacted that two, at least, of the six-months courses then prescribed must be attended in each of the academic sessions, — a regulation which can be regarded only as a *fiscal* enactment on the part of the Professors. Very early in 1824, the Professor of Midwifery gave in an application to the Town Council, as Patrons of the University, to have his class added to the curriculum of medical study. I shall not propose to you to wade through the long, unpleasant, and, as it proved, expensive controversy to which that application gave rise; but I appeal with confidence to the medical profession in this city, whether, *bona fide*, the addition of the Midwifery class to the curriculum of medical study should be considered as the voluntary act of the Medical Faculty, as it is represented by Dr Alison, or as the act of the Town Council, in their character of Patrons of the University.

In the course of the communications which passed between the Town Council and the Senatus on the subject of the Midwifery class, it was announced that the Medical Faculty had *long* been contemplating a *very extensive and important system* of alterations with regard to the Statuta Solennia, — a declaration of very great importance, seeing that it may be regarded as having laid the foundation of all the changes which have since been made. Accordingly, in July 1824, the Medical Faculty printed a draft of altered Statutes. Between that time and their final settlement, the new Statutes underwent a great number of modifications. Indeed, so numerous and extensive were these modifications, that the circumstance could not fail to excite grave doubts in the minds of many, as to the maturity of deliberation of which it was professed that the original proposals had enjoyed the benefit. In the first edition of the new Statutes, besides the addition of the Midwifery class, the extension of the course of study from three to four years, and the obligation to pass one of these years at the University of Edinburgh, — which changes they retained in all the phases through which they subsequently passed, — the only other proposal was, that to the six months of Clinical Medicine previously required, three additional months should be added. Now, whatever might be the intrinsic merit of this last proposal, it certainly exposed the Medical Faculty to some awkward imputations; for, in the first place, as all the members of their own body, and they alone, are entitled to share in the teaching of Clinical Medicine, it not only retained amongst themselves the benefit to be derived from this new *burden* upon the students, — to use the phrase employed by the Medical Faculty upon such occasions, — but it divided this benefit equally among them, without preference of the one over the other; and, in the second place, as it had been found impossible to attract a sufficient number of paying pupils to the summer course of Clinical Medicine, to render their delivery worth the trouble of the Professors, this inconvenience the new compulsory regulation was well calculated to obviate. Accordingly, both within and without the walls of the University the proposal was vigorously assailed, and in the second edition of the proposed Statutes it was withdrawn.

In lieu, then, of the obligation of attending an additional summer course of Clinical Medicine, the *second edition* of the Statutes contained merely a *recommendation* to the students to attend Practical Anatomy, Medical Jurisprudence, Clinical Surgery, Natural History, and Natural Philosophy, as by so doing, it was stated, they might "obtain information which *may often* be useful to the physician."

Now, it appears to me, that the dispositions of the MEDICAL FACULTY, as regards the extension of the course of study required of candidates for the medical degree, must be judged of from the proceedings which they adopted on finding it expedient to abandon their intention of enforcing attendance on an additional summer course of Clinical Medicine.

In passing through the ordeal of the SENATUS ACADEMICUS, however, it was determined that other additions to the curriculum should be made, and Natural History and Medical Jurisprudence were selected as the classes which might most advantageously be added; but, by some slight-of-hand-like proceeding, particularly described by the then Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in a memorial to the Royal Commissioners for visiting the Universities of Scotland, this arrangement too was overthrown. Had it been carried into effect, it may be remarked, the Medical Faculty would at that time have been increased by the addition of the Professors of these two branches. Finally, in the Statutes as at length issued, whilst it was rendered imperative on the student to attend two additional courses, besides the Midwifery, it was left to his choice to make a selection out of five,—viz, the Practical Anatomy, Medical Jurisprudence, Clinical Surgery, Military Surgery, and Natural History. And no addition was made to the privileged body of the Medical Faculty.

From this statement you will perceive how an arrangement, calculated, if not intended, to be beneficial, so far as the Professors were concerned, to the members of the Medical Faculty alone, terminated in calling into existence a sort of subsidiary Faculty, endowed with considerable, though not co-extensive, privileges; and you will be able to judge whether the extension of the curriculum in 1825, with the exception of the additional year of study, and the necessity of passing one year at the University of Edinburgh, can be considered as the spontaneous act of the Medical Faculty, or as one in which they found themselves unintentionally involved, beyond the power of extricating themselves.

In the summer of 1826, the Royal Commission was issued for a visitation of the Universities of Scotland. Every one is aware how laboriously the Commissioners executed the duties assigned to them; and, in particular, how fully they took into their consideration the subject of Medical Education. Their proceedings could not fail forcibly to draw the attention of all members of the profession in Scotland to this subject; and as one of the first fruits of their labours may be considered the revision which the College of Surgeons made in 1829, of the regulations to be observed by candidates for its diploma. By the new code then adopted by that body, the number of medical courses was increased from ten to thirteen, besides instruction in Mathematics, and attendance on a course of Mechanical Philosophy; and in the following year (1830), a farther extension took place in the addition of Medical Jurisprudence. The consequence was, that the course of education prescribed by the College of Surgeons to candidates for its license, now very considerably exceeded that exacted by the University for its degree,—viz., in the rate of fifteen courses to ten, independently of regular instruction in the Elements of Mathematics required by the College of Surgeons, but not by the University.

We come now to the period when the second extension of the curriculum took place,—i. e. the autumn of 1831,—when the Pathology and Surgery classes were added; and I confess it does appear to me that Dr Alison indulges in a very loose mode of speaking, when he includes these, in whole or in part, among the additions voluntarily made, either by the Medical Faculty or by the Senatus Academicus. Their recorded memorials attest what obstructions they endeavoured to throw in the way of the two new Regius Professors,—of the Professor of Surgery, on the pretence that his appointment would prove injurious to the pecuniary interests of one of their colleagues,—an apprehension which, I feel confident, has been completely nullified by experience, and which no member of the profession, out of the Medical Faculty, at the time, admitted to have the slightest appearance of

probability. After these two additions, the courses required by the University and the college of Surgeons respectively, were twelve and fifteen.

The last additions to the curriculum took place in 1833. Dr Allison has very plainly stated the motives which influenced the Medical Faculty on this occasion. They were engaged in measures for getting their graduates freed from the oppressive operation of the English Apothecaries' Act. To give weight to their representations, it was necessary that they should be able to shew that the education of these graduates was, in extent, equal to, if not greater than, that of the licentiates of the Apothecaries' Company; and it could not be very flattering to them that, in the discussions likely to arise on this subject, it should come to light that this education was inferior to that of their neighbours and allies in these measures, the Royal College of Surgeons; nor can I doubt that a circumstance, which materially promoted the cause of improvement upon that occasion, was the great influence which the vigorous and liberal intellect of a colleague, (of whom they have unfortunately been since deprived by a premature fate,) at that time exerted over their deliberations. Accordingly, instead of the regulation of 1825, requiring attendance on two out of five classes, four of these were rendered imperative, and the fifth,—viz., the Military Surgery,—was again set aside; making the number of courses required by the University fourteen,—the number required by the College of Surgeons remaining fifteen.*

The immediate object which the Medical Faculty had in view in making this extension of the curriculum has not yet, unfortunately, been attained; and Dr Alison seems to think that, as the graduates of the University of Edinburgh are not allowed to practise as apothecaries in England, it is very hard to require of them as extended a course of education as is required by the College of Surgeons of their licentiates. But to the mode recently adopted, and, I am sorry to say, in some measure, countenanced by Dr Alison, of estimating the value of an Edinburgh degree simply by the *legal privilege* which it infers, and independently of the credit which the public is disposed to attach to its attainment, I beg leave most decidedly to object. It is in a different conviction that a number of students come here to obtain that degree; and though this were a delusion on their part, which I fondly persuade myself it is not,—though the public did not really attach any greater weight to an Edinburgh degree than to any other certificate of qualification, I cannot think it very prudent in those to proclaim the fact whose great anxiety it is to maintain undiminished the number of medical students and graduates at this University.

Such, I believe, is the simple history of the three extensions that have been made in the curriculum of study required of candidates for the medical degree at this University; and it seems to me very sufficiently to establish, that the Medical Faculty, so far from having, on the several occasions alluded to, spontaneously originated improvements in the system of medical education pursued at this University, have been driven or dragged into the adoption of these by force applied from without.

But whether or not these additions to the medical curriculum were voluntarily made, it certainly appears that the Medical Faculty has begun to regret their having taken place; and from the language that has been used during the progress of the present discussion, it appears to me to be pretty manifest, that if the Chair of Pathology be got rid of, it is not here that the work will end; and that at least Botany, Natural History, and Medical

* Each of the University courses is on a distinct subject,—two of the College of Surgeons' courses (Anatomy and Surgery) are reduplications. The University requires Botany, Natural History, and General Pathology,—which are not required by the College of Surgeons; the College requires Mechanical Philosophy and Practical Chemistry, besides Mathematics as above mentioned,—which are not required by the University.

Jurisprudence, will, in due time, be heaved overboard, so as to approximate the tonnage of the medical curriculum of this University to the lighter burden of that of the University of Glasgow.

In submitting to you these observations, I have no wish to deny to the arguments which the Medical Faculty may adduce for the abolition of the Chair of General Pathology the benefit of whatever intrinsic force they may possess. All that I contend for is, that these arguments are not entitled to more weight with the Patrons and the public, on account of the quarter from which they proceed.—I am, &c.,

AN ALUMNUS OF THE UNIVERSITY.

Edinburgh, September 23, 1841.

P.S.—Since writing the above, I have seen in the Scotsman of yesterday a letter by the Dean of the Medical Faculty of the University, in which he expresses himself much dissatisfied at its being represented, that “the same body” which is now seeking the abolition of the Chair of General Pathology, is that which opposed various other additions to the course of education required of candidates for medical degrees,—seeing that at the periods at which these proceedings took place, “this ‘same body’ contained only three of its existing thirteen members.”

I humbly conceive that the *body* has continued the same, whatever change may have occurred in the *individuals* composing it; not only the same in name,—but, to judge from the analogy of sentiment and reasoning, the same unfortunately in spirit. I have no doubt that the time will come when the successors of the present members of the Medical Faculty will be as anxious to disavow their identity with the body which so vehemently opposed the Chair of General Pathology, as they themselves are to establish that they are not the same body which opposed the separation of Surgery from Anatomy in 1777; which opposed the erection of a Chair of Medical Jurisprudence in 1798; which resisted, as long as it could, the institution of a Chair of Clinical Surgery in 1803; and, when they found it at length necessary to succumb, caused the commission of the Professor to be clogged with a futile but insulting proviso; which resisted the institution of the Chair of Military Surgery in 1806; and which in 1815, gave the go-bye to Dr Hamilton’s application to have the Midwifery Class added to the Medical curriculum.