

**Postscript to Dr. Simpson's memorial on the propriety of continuing the  
Chair of General Pathology / [Sir James Young Simpson].**

**Contributors**

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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
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## POSTSCRIPT

TO

### DR SIMPSON'S MEMORIAL ON THE PROPRIETY OF CONTINUING THE CHAIR OF GENERAL PATHOLOGY.

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I CONSIDERED it my duty on Monday last, to submit to the Patrons a few remarks in reply to some statements in the Memorials of Professors Syme and Christison. In preparing these remarks for the College Committee meeting of that day, I was interrupted by a sudden professional call into Roxburghshire, and was obliged to break them off very hastily. I did not deem it necessary to resume the subject on my return, and only most reluctantly do so at present in consequence of learning, during the last two days, that some arguments that had been brought forward by Mr Syme and Dr Christison were looked upon by the Patrons as possessing weight in the question under discussion. As the whole inquiry is one of the most serious and momentous import in regard to the interests and the reputation of the University, I feel assured that the Patrons will excuse me laying very briefly before them the strong objections which I conceive to exist against the principal new statements and views brought forward by my Colleagues.

Mr Syme in his Memorial re-expresses (p. 7) his dread of "wide and *general* views" of disease as, in his opinion, "the most certain steps for mistifying the minds" of Medical Pupils;—and he further pronounces (p. 7) their being "led to survey the subjects of their instruction" in two different groupings or descriptions, as producing "*more* difficulty in fully comprehending them." I have already given in my Memorial (p. 19) all the comment which the first of these objections of Mr Syme's requires; and as his second objection is of the same illogical stamp as the first, I would only, I fear, be regarded by the Patrons as wasting their time if I paused to offer a for-

mal reply to it. I pass on therefore at once to consider what Mr Syme thinks his own *strongest* objection against the institution and continuance of the Pathology Chair.

"*The objection to a separate Chair of Pathology, which is perhaps (Mr Syme observes) the MOST IMPORTANT of the whole, may be lastly mentioned....It is surely in the highest degree inconsistent and absurd to mix up with the regular Courses of systematic instruction by practical men, another Course of Lectures extending over the whole subject of Pathology, and delivered from a Chair which is not held to require, or rather does NOT admit of, a PRACTICAL OCCUPANT.*" (Mr Syme's Statement, p. 5.)

Dr Christison's "Statement" here happily saves me from the *onus* of answering this "most important" of all Mr Syme's arguments against a separate Chair of General Pathology. For, as Dr Christison ingenuously admits (p. 19), the present Occupant of the Chair of General Pathology in the University of Paris is "a man who ranks as the most eminent Pathologist of the day, *who is the best employed Physician in the French capital*, and who has [had] been for some time a highly popular Professor of the Practice of Physic." Thus, in despite of Mr Syme's "most important" and, may I add, most extraordinary objection, Dr Christison shows that the Parisian Chair, and hence any other Chair of General Pathology, *does* admit of a *Practical Occupant*, seeing it is at this moment held by the first and best employed Medical *Practitioner* in the French metropolis.

Mr Syme has declared to the Patrons (see his Statement, p. 10), that in relation to the discussion upon the propriety of the Pathology Chair, he "could easily," if he chose, prove that statements, had been submitted to them containing (to use Mr Syme's own language,—not mine) "the most gross and inexplicable inaccuracy." (P. 10.) As the above "gross" contradiction of Mr Syme's statements by Dr Christison's facts apparently belongs to such a category, I shall leave Mr Syme to explain it also, if he chooses, along with the others with which he professes himself to be acquainted. In the mean time it is but justice to the Medical Faculty, as a body, to remark that, "in order to prepare their representation soon enough," Mr Syme and Dr Christison undertook different parts of it. "This explanation (as Dr Christison observes, p. 3) will account for some occasional repetitions, and other *obvious* defects, which, with more allowance of time, might have been avoided."

I have already quoted Dr Alison's opinion, that "our real knowledge of Pathology is very limited." (See his Letter, 1837, p. 8.) Mr Syme avers, on the other hand, that "General Pathology is a field of boundless extent" (Statement, p. 7), and its "importance (as

he thinks) in Medical education does not require the enforcement of any argument." (P. 5.) He argues, however, against it being taught *systematically* in a separate Chair, because it is taught *incidentally* in the Courses of the Practice of Physic, of Surgery, Midwifery, Military Surgery, Clinical Medicine, Clinical Surgery, and the Institutes of Medicine. To give his deduction in his own words,—

"*There are thus (says Mr Syme) ten Members of the Medical Faculty [in seven Medical Classes] who not only may, but must, lecture on Pathology; and in these circumstances it may be asked, how did a Chair exclusively devoted to Pathology ever come to be instituted in our University.*" (Mr Syme's Statement, p. 6.)

Now exactly the same question might be asked, and exactly the same argument used, in reference to any of the principal Medical Chairs in our University. To take one example as a specimen of all. The Professor of Surgery "may and must lecture," during his Course, on various points in Anatomy, in Materia Medica and Dietetics, in Physiology, in Practice of Physic, in Midwifery and Diseases of Females and Infants, in Medical Jurisprudence, in Clinical Surgery and Medicine, and in Military Surgery; but surely because the Professor of Surgery has occasion to treat occasionally of matters the full consideration of which more properly belongs to these other Chairs, it is no reason why the separate Chairs, and systematic Courses of Anatomy, Practice of Physic, Materia Medica, &c. &c. should be suppressed; any more than, because the Professor of Surgery treats occasionally on different points in Pathology, the separate Chair and systematic Course of General Pathology should be suppressed. Nay, is not the very circumstance adduced by Mr Syme that Pathology is taught in disjointed parts by *ten* different Professors, the strongest of all reasons for uniting these ten disjointed and probably conflicting disquisitions on the subject into one connected systematic whole? For it is a very different matter to treat Pathology, or any other particular department of Medical Science, fully in a systematic Course devoted to the subject, and to treat it incidentally in seven or in ten different Courses. For example, "It is true," as Professor Williams justly observes, "that the Professors of Physic and Surgery must introduce the subject of Morbid Anatomy (one of the branches of General Pathology) in their Lectures; but this is *very different from fully teaching it*.....I question (he properly adds) whether this partial glance at so extensive a subject may not rather MISLEAD than soundly instruct." (See his Letter in my Memoirs, p. 18.)

The preceding are the only two new arguments of any importance which I find in the joint Memorials of my Colleagues for the "suppression of the Chair of General Pathology." Let me next briefly di-

rect the attention of the Patrons to different statements which my Colleagues have offered for the abolition of this Chair, as derived from the constitution of the Medical Schools in our own country, in Germany, and France ; and, first, from

## THE CONSTITUTION OF BRITISH MEDICAL SCHOOLS.

*"No other Chair of General Pathology exists in any University or Medical School within the British dominions."* (Mr Syme's Statement, p. 8.)

The Royal School of Medicine in Manchester (the oldest, I believe, and the best known of the English provincial Medical Schools) is provided with a Lectureship or Chair of *"General Pathology."* The Class of *"General Pathology"* forms *one* out of the *nine* Medical Classes that are to be taught there during the ensuing Winter Session. Certificates of attendance on the General Pathology and other Medical Classes in that active Institution qualify for the London University and other public boards in England. (See Dr Forbes, British and Foreign Medical Review, No. XXIV. Advertising Sheet, p. 5.) Further, "there can be no reason to doubt, I think, that such a Course will be given in every *respectable* Medical School in this country in a few years." (Sir James Clark in his Letter, printed in the Memorial, p. 44.)

It is needless to repeat what has been already stated, that Chairs for the teaching of one of the *departments* of General Pathology, viz. Morbid or Pathological Anatomy, exist in University College, and other Medical Schools in London ; but it may be considered of importance to add, what was omitted previously, that the Candidate for the license of an English Apothecary is, by the Regulations of the Apothecaries' Hall of London, required to shew a Certificate that *he* has received instruction in *Morbid Anatomy*, before he is allowed to present himself for examination. Will the Patrons of the University of Edinburgh permit the Candidate for our Degree of Physician to obtain his diploma without (as my Colleagues wish) any such extent of Pathological knowledge as is required of the English Apothecary ?

In my Memorial I took occasion, at p. 8, to state that 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 Boards now accept six months of Practice of Physic and six of Pathology as equivalent. On this subject Dr Christison remarks :—

*"The Army and Naval Boards do not make attendance on General*

*Pathology imperative ;" but consider, " in concurrence with the sentiments of the Faculty [of Edinburgh], that substantially a Course of Lectures on General Pathology is equivalent to a Course of the Practice of Physic. (Dr Christison's Statement, p. 21.)*

Dr Christison endeavours by these remarks to fix upon the Boards in question a degree of professional ignorance and confusion of which they are happily guiltless. For if the Army and Navy Boards had committed the strange error of considering these two Courses as "*substantially*" the same, would they not have further taken two Courses of General Pathology as equal to two of the Practice of Physic? This they certainly do not. In their Regulations, such as they now stand, these Boards evidently offer *all* the encouragement within *their* power to the study of General Pathology. If they had made the Pathology absolutely imperative, what would have been the effect? Only Students from the Edinburgh, or from the Edinburgh and Manchester Schools, could have presented themselves before them. As the matter stood, the rule was one that decidedly tended to promote, rather than otherwise, the attendance at Edinburgh, of Medical Pupils studying for the Public Services.

#### CONSTITUTION OF GERMAN MEDICAL SCHOOLS.

It has been zealously argued by Dr Christison, in the Statement which he has submitted to the Patrons, that no reason in favour of our Chair of General Pathology can be deduced from the analogy of foreign Universities,—from the existence of similar Chairs in Germany,—or the recent founding of one in the University of Paris. "*They,*" Dr Christison observes, " who advance these facts as an argument, must be little acquainted with the subject they talk about ; for the whole organization of Chairs, the manner of teaching them, the mode of attending them, and the means of supporting them, are so different in Germany and France from what is the case here, that an analogy in regard to any particular part of the respective systems cannot be formed without great risk of error." (P. 16.)

Dr Christison, unfortunately for himself, descends into specialities in support of this assumed and sweeping general statement. He begins with Germany, and observes,—

*" The Medical School of Berlin unquestionably contains Professorships of General Pathology. Last year no fewer than five distinct Courses of Lectures, by five different Teachers, were given on its various departments." (Dr Christison's Statement, p. 16, 17.)*

The Patrons will, I believe, consider it as important to have the *additional* information stated to them, that four of these Courses of

General Pathology taught last winter in Berlin were given "*Privatim*," or as Private Courses,—that is to say, the Students who attended them were obliged to *pay* the Lecturer for his instructions, on the same plan as our own Lecturers are remunerated.\*

Would (may I add) the Medical Students of Berlin support four contemporaneous private Classes of General Pathology in their single School, if they did not find that they derived highly useful and necessary instruction from these Lectures?

*In Berlin and other German Universities, the Professors "are not, as here, restricted to a particular subject, but may, and many do, give several Courses on different departments of Medical Science."* (Dr Christison's Statement, p. 17.)

"General Pathology is considered at all the Universities of Bavaria and Germany as a separate Course, perfectly distinct from the Courses of Practice of Physic and Surgery, and is taught by a Professor *appointed and paid for that purpose*." (See Letter of Professor Rineker of Wurzburg, in my Memorial, p. 10, 11.) Further "the Professor of General Pathology has, at the examination *pro gradu Doctoris*, to examine upon his own subject, exactly in the same manner as the Professors of Anatomy, Physiology, Practice of Physic, &c. upon theirs." (*Ib.* p. 11.) The Professor of General Pathology, and any of his brother Professors, may certainly, in addition to their own fixed branches, lecture on other departments if they choose, or if they have time or inclination to do so. This is undoubtedly carried to a greater extent in Germany than with us; but it is not unknown even at home. Dr Christison is engaged during the spring in a Course of Lectures on Clinical Medicine, in addition to his own separate and distinct Course of Materia Medica, and is, so far, not "restricted to a particular subject;" though he is, nevertheless, our Academic Professor of Materia Medica, and, as such, examines Candidates on their Graduation trials.

*In Germany, "Candidates for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine are not required to attend any particular Professor, and not even absolutely any particular Course of Lectures."* (Dr Christison's Statement, p. 17.)

In Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, and Bavaria, the *Precise Course* or *Order of Medical Studies* to be followed by Candidates for Medical Diplomas and Degrees is fixed and established by the Laws of the

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\* The four private Courses of General Pathology to which I here allude were those delivered by Hecker, by Schultz, by Eck, and by Dann (see p. 3 of Verzeichniss der Vorlesungen zu Berlin in Winterhalbenjahre 1840-41, &c.).

Civil Government, even down to the minutiae of the particular Classes which the Students must attend during each particular Session.\* In Prussia, a particular order of Study is recommended, but the "order" is not imperative, though the Classes contained in it are so. Nor is there any exception even in the case of General Pathology; for, speaking of the German Universities, Professor Rineker states, "Every Student of Medicine who wishes to graduate *must* attend a full Course of Lectures upon General Pathology, and must produce a Certificate to that effect. (See Professor Rineker's Letter in Memorial, p. 11.)

*In Berlin "there is no Professorship corresponding with our Institutes of Medicine."* (Dr Christison's Statement, p. 17.)

Merely because the three separate departments which collectively constitute our Institutes,—viz. 1. Physiology, 2. Pathology, and, 3. Therapeutics,—are acknowledged to be each of such length and importance as to require separate Chairs, and constitute *three* separate Professorships instead of one.

## CONSTITUTION OF THE FRENCH MEDICAL SCHOOLS.

The argument in favour of a Chair of Pathology in Edinburgh,—which might be founded on the organization of the Parisian School,—is, Dr Christison thinks, liable to fallacy in various ways. Amongst other matters, he observes, that in Paris,

*"The Students pay a small Matriculation Fee once a quarter, which entitles them to attend any Courses of Lectures they choose."* (Statement, p. 18.)

In Edinburgh, Students proceed only so far differently, that they entitle themselves to attend any Courses they choose by feeing the Professors whose particular Courses they wish to select.

Dr Christison continues,—

*"And if there is (in Paris) nominally an Imperative Course of Study, there is in effect no Imperative Class, since there is no means of enforcing attendance."* (Dr Christison's Statement, p. 18.)

To begin with the last point. By a statute passed in 1825, in reference to the Medical Classes in the University of Paris, and which statute I am not aware has ever been abrogated, it was ordered that, "At the Classes, the roll of Students shall be called at least twice a month, and any one who answers for another shall lose an inscription,"

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\* See Raimann's *Medicinische Jahrbücher*, vol. xiv. (1833), p. 321.

or Session. It was at the same time enacted, "There shall not be given a certificate of assiduity to any Student who has, without a valid excuse, been twice absent from the roll during one trimestre," or three months' Course; and further, "No certificate of Inscription is given except for the trimestres in which the Student has obtained certificates of assiduity." (See *Les Lois et Règlements sur les Etudes et l'Exercice des diverses parties de la Médecine*, par L. Hubert, Chef des Bureaux de la Faculté, p. 78 and 79. Règle xxxvii. xxxix. and xl.)

In regard to the first point in the above proposition, it is only necessary to mention, that Candidates for Graduation in Medicine or Surgery in Paris are required to study four years, or eight half-year Sessions, and they have a "*prescribed order*" of study and of Classes laid down for them,—a certain and definite number of Courses being required for each Session,—as three Classes,—Anatomy, Physiology, and Chemistry for the first Session, and so on. (See Edwin Lee's *Observations on the Medical Institutions of France*, &c., p. 4 and 5; or Forbes' *British and Foreign Medical Review*, vol. i.)

"*I have witnessed in Paris* (says Dr Christison), *where the principal Medical Chairs ought to be, and many actually are, attended by a thousand Students, certain Professors lecturing to five-and-twenty and thirty Pupils only.*" (Dr Christison's Statement, p. 18.)

Could corresponding instances not be pointed out by Dr Christison in our own University, where the rules for imperative attendance are presumed to be more strict?

"*Even with all their facilities in favour of the erection of new Chairs, the Parisian Medical Faculty resisted the institution of the Chair of General Pathology in 1831.*" (Dr Christison's Statement, p. 18.)

I have shown in my Memorial (p. 12 and 13), that four of the Members of the Parisian Medical Faculty were on the Government Commission that first recommended the erection of the Chair of General Pathology in their University, and that the protest that was drawn up by the Faculty was NOT made to "resist the *institution* of the Chair," but made merely against the mode of *election* to it.

Lastly, Mr Syme (p. 9) "begs most seriously to protest" against the continuance of the Pathology Chair, in as far as it is derived from the analogy of the Continental Schools, on other grounds; for though such a Chair exist in many Continental Schools, yet, Mr Syme argues, the continental system of Medical Education is not better than our own, being "of a theoretical or speculative character, while," he adds,

"*The [Medical] instruction here is directed more with a view to its PRACTICAL results,*" and "*British Physicians and Surgeons stand higher as PRACTITIONERS.*"

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only once suppressed. But our academic session admits of only 110 or 120 Lectures. One session Dr Alison gave nearly 50 Lectures on Pathology; and, as I have already shewn, these Lectures, though greatly abridged, did not by any means nearly comprehend the consideration of the whole subjects of General Pathology. (See my Memorial, p. 15.) It is indeed *impossible* for any man in the present state of the science to do any thing like justice to the subject in less than an Academic Course of the full length. I would speak this in the strongest language I could employ, as the result both of Dr Thomson's experience in teaching General Pathology and my own.

But even again supposing for a moment that we take the other view of the case, and believe with Mr Syme that

*Were this Pathology Chair abolished, Dr Alison would resume the Pathology as the proper duties of his province.* (Mr Syme's Statement, p. 6.)

Then I would ask one simple question. If all this were effected, and if Dr Alison again devoted, during his course, fifty Lectures to Pathology (the greatest number he ever delivered), *what would become of his fifty present Lectures on Physiology, which these would supplant?* I hope my Colleagues will not next argue that the *half* (fifty Lectures) *of the Course of PHYSIOLOGY should be abolished*; and yet I cannot see any other alternative to which their reasoning would or could lead. Further, that the *Physiology itself most amply occupies* all the time of Dr Alison and his Pupils, is evident from the plain fact, that he has never of late years, as I have already stated, been able to overtake one single Lecture on the other remaining and most important department of his Course—GENERAL THERAPEUTICS.

#### *Dr Sharpey's Course in University College, London.*

I have, on a former occasion, replied to Mr Syme's allegation, that I was misleading the Council by stating that Dr Sharpey's Course of between six and seven months' Lectures in University College, London, was a Course of Physiology similar to Dr Alison's. I have already shown (Memorial, p. 41) that it is illustrated, as Dr Alison's and every other *complete* Course of Physiology must be, by reference to General, and, I might have added, to Visceral Anatomy.\* I had not an opportunity, at the time, of referring to our own Faculty Minutes on the subject. I have done so since, and beg to state the results.

At a Sederunt of our Medical Faculty on the 12th November 1838,

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\* Every Old Student of Dr Alison's must recollect the pains he took to show (to mention only one specimen of *Visceral Anatomy*) the course of the fibres of the Heart, and the other anatomical peculiarities in the structure of that Viscus.

at which Professors Graham, Christison, Alison, Sme, and Traill, were present, it was agreed, "with regard to Dr Sharpey's and Mr Quain's Courses" in University College, to ask the Secretary to that Institution, "Are we right in supposing Quain's Course is equivalent to our Course of Anatomy, and Sharpey's to Physiology?" The following was the OFFICIAL reply of the Secretary, Mr Atkinson.

*University College, London, 15th Nov. 1838.*

To the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine,  
University of Edinburgh.

SIR,—By a letter from Dr Traill, dated Nov. 11, I am requested to inform the Medical Faculty of the University of Edinburgh whether they have been correctly given to understand that "the Course of Lectures of Mr Quain in this College are equivalent, or nearly so, to the Course of Anatomy in the University of Edinburgh; and the Course of Professor Sharpey equivalent to one of Physiology, which has usually been received at Edinburgh as equivalent to the Institutes of Medicine." In reply, I beg to say, *that the understanding as above stated IS CORRECT.*

For the further information of the Faculty, I take leave to add, that the Lectures of Professor Quain include a full and systematic Course of Descriptive Anatomy and Surgical Anatomy. The Course extends from the beginning of October to the middle of April. The Class meets six times in each week,—five times for Lecture, once for examination.

The Lectures of Professor Sharpey are of the same frequency and duration, and comprehend a full and systematic Course of Physiology, with the addition of the Anatomy of the textures (or General Anatomy) and the minute Anatomy of the Viscera, the Brain, and Organs of the Senses.—I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

(Signed) CHAS. C. ATKINSON,  
Secretary to the Council and Senate.

Mr Gordon, Secretary to the University of Edinburgh, who has the original letter of Mr Atkinson in his keeping, informs me that since the reception of the above communication, Dr Sharpey's ticket has been constantly received here by the Dean of the Faculty, on precisely the same footing as Dr Alison's.

J. Y. SIMPSON,  
*Professor of Midwifery.*

22 Albany Street.  
2d October 1841.

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Dr Keith

Marys O'Leary