

PASSAGES OF MEDICAL HISTORY.

EDINBURGH MEDICINE FROM 1860.*

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When Syme resigned the chair of clinical surgery in 1869, Lister, who had begun the study of antiseptics in Glasgow, returned to Edinburgh as Syme's successor, and continued his work on antiseptic surgery here. His work was done in the old Royal Infirmary, for the present Infirmary had its foundation-stone laid only in 1870, and was not completed and open for patients until 29th October 1879. By this time Lister had gone to London, where he succeeded Sir William Fergusson as professor of clinical surgery in King's College in 1877.

Another person who came to Edinburgh in 1869 was Sophia Jex Blake, one of the protagonists in the fight for the throwing open of the medical profession to women. Some of the professors were favourable, others were opposed. It is impossible to go into the details of the struggle now, but the dispute ended when the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889 placed women on the same footing as men with regard to graduation in medicine, and the University of Edinburgh resolved to admit women to medical graduation in October 1894.

In the chair of systematic surgery Professor James Miller was succeeded (1864) by James Spence, who had been a demonstrator under Monro and who wrote a textbook, *Lectures on Surgery*, which formed one of the chief textbooks on this subject for many years. His mournful expression and attitude of mind gained for him among the students the name of "Dismal Jimmy." On Spence's death in 1882 he was succeeded by John Chiene as professor of surgery. Chiene is chiefly remembered nowadays for his fondness for aphorisms regarding surgical experience, the conduct of practice, the foibles of patients, and other matters which he believed to be of importance. Many of his old students still treasure such phrases as, "A pimple on a man's nose is of more interest to *him* than a sarcoma in his neighbour's thigh"; "Never

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smoke in your consulting room"; "Surgery is nothing but applied anatomy and a little bacteriology." When he retired in 1909 he was succeeded by Henry Alexis Thomson, a person of decisive and epigrammatic style in lecturing. He was followed in the chair by D. P. D. Wilkie, whose recent death we deplore.

A distinguished surgeon of the Extra-Mural School was Sir Patrick Heron Watson (1832-1908), who had served in the Crimean War and on his return held courses upon venereal diseases and upon military surgery; later, as a surgeon to the Royal Infirmary, upon clinical surgery. He was a bold and brilliant operator, and also a physician whose advice was sought by persons from all parts of the country. His manner was sedate, urbane, and decisive, and he was celebrated for his imperturbability. A contemporary as a lecturer on surgery in the Extra-Mural School was Joseph Bell (1837-1911). As a surgeon to the Royal Infirmary he attracted large clinics, and his skill in making diagnoses and unexpected deductions was commemorated by one of his students, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in the character of Sherlock Holmes.

John Duncan (1839-99) was another member of this group of surgeons to the Royal Infirmary. His tall silk hat, long grey beard, and pair of high-stepping horses which he drove in a yellow dogcart made him for many years a well-known figure in the Edinburgh streets.

When Lister left Edinburgh the chair of clinical surgery was filled by the appointment of Thomas Annandale (1839-1908). He was a surgeon of proverbial manipulative skill, possessed of charming personality and sympathetic nature. He was succeeded by Francis Mitchell Caird, who had for many years been an extra-mural lecturer in surgery. Caird maintained many connections with continental schools of surgery, and was in Edinburgh a pioneer in the performance of gastric and intestinal operations, in which he achieved great success, often amid most adverse surroundings.

In medicine Thomas Laycock (1812-76) had succeeded Alison in 1855. His work on *Mind and Brain*, published in 1860, prepared the way for the study of unconscious cerebration to which he afterwards chiefly devoted himself, and his descriptions of mental phenomena have received due recognition only in the last few years. He introduced a course on medical psychology at Edinburgh University. Laycock died in 1876

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and was succeeded by Sir Thomas Grainger Stewart, a contributor to both professional and dramatic literature, an entertaining lecturer, and a well-known consultant.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Extra-Mural School had a distinguished galaxy of teachers in medicine, of whom Sir Byrom Bramwell, G. A. Gibson, Alexander Bruce, and Sir Robert W. Philip were the most outstanding. Bramwell was especially noted for his researches on nervous disease. Gibson devoted himself largely to the study of the heart, and Bruce interested himself particularly in the relations of morbid anatomy to medicine. Philip graduated in 1882, the year in which Koch discovered the tubercle bacillus, and becoming imbued with the new idea regarding the infectiousness of tuberculosis, he established in 1887 the Victoria Dispensary for diseases of the chest, with the object of discovering and treating the malady at an early stage in other members of the family of affected persons. This principle has led to the establishment of similar dispensaries throughout the world, and has undoubtedly contributed much to the diminution of pulmonary tuberculosis.

The Royal Hospital for Sick Children was founded in 1860, and the Edinburgh physician whose name is associated more than that of any other with advancement of the knowledge of diseases affecting children was Dr John Thomson (1856-1926). One of the earliest textbooks on this subject was his *Guide to the Clinical Study and Treatment of Sick Children*, published in 1898.

In midwifery Sir J. Y. Simpson, who had made Edinburgh famous as a school of obstetrics and gynæcology, was succeeded by his nephew Sir Alexander Simpson (1835-1916) in 1870, and he held the chair till he retired in 1905. He was succeeded by Sir John Halliday Croom (1847-1923), a clear and popular lecturer. The names of A. H. Freeland Barbour and David Berry Hart were closely associated for their conjoint work, especially the *Manual of Gynæcology*, which became a well-known textbook in medical schools all over the world. They did much valuable work also on the anatomy of labour, and especially of the pelvic floor. Thomas Keith (1827-95) comes within this period as his celebrated series of successful ovariectomies was carried out between 1862 and 1874. John William Ballantyne (1861-1923) was celebrated for his work upon diseases of the fœtus, and also in a clinical sense for his

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insistence upon the importance of ante-natal control of pregnant women. He was the first person in Great Britain to establish a clinic for ante-natal supervision, out of which developed the ante-natal departments in Edinburgh and other places. Robert Milne Murray (1855-1904), although an obstetrician, devoted himself to studying the applications of electricity in medicine, and made many advancements in this subject. He was the first medical electrician to the Royal Infirmary before the days of X-rays.

In the subject of anatomy Sir William Turner succeeded Goodsir in 1865. He was for many years the most prominent figure in Edinburgh University, and has been described as "an inspiring teacher, an enthusiastic investigator, an astute organiser, and a strong ruler." He was succeeded in 1903 by David John Cunningham, whose textbook on anatomy is still in constant use.

In physiology Hughes Bennett was succeeded by William Rutherford (1839-99) in 1874. Rutherford's personality and peculiarities provided Conan Doyle, who had been a student under him, with the basis for his well-known character, Professor Challenger. He was succeeded in 1899 by Edward Albert Schafer, later known as Sir Edward Sharpey Schafer, under whom the Edinburgh school of physiology developed enormously on its research and scientific side. An extra-mural teacher of this period was Diarmid Noel Paton (1859-1928), who became professor of physiology in Glasgow University in 1906.

In pathology Professor Sanders was succeeded in 1881 by William Smith Greenfield, a somewhat confusing lecturer, and he in turn by James Lorrain Smith.

In materia medica Sir Robert Christison was succeeded in 1877 by Sir Thomas R. Fraser (1841-1920), whose name is associated with his work on strophanthus and other arrow poisons, antivenin and work done in connection with Alexander Crum Brown, Professor of Chemistry, on chemical constitution in relation to pharmacological action.

In medical jurisprudence Sir Douglas Maclagan was appointed professor in 1862. He had qualified in 1833, more than one hundred years ago, and in early life became a surgeon to the Royal Infirmary. Abandoning surgery he had lectured on materia medica, and had again forsaken this subject for forensic medicine. As there was no retiring age for professors,

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many people still in practice must remember him, when well over eighty years of age, reading his time-worn lectures in the 'nineties, inaudible beyond the first few benches, and creating an impression somewhat similar to that which might have been experienced if one of the worthies of a bygone age had risen from the dead. He was succeeded in 1897 by Sir Henry Duncan Littlejohn (1826-1914). He was a man business-like in method, alert in movement and in mental grasp, and deeply sympathetic or very brusque according to his humour at the time. His great achievements were in the line of public health, and one of his noteworthy exploits was to urge the Town Council of Edinburgh to obtain from Parliament an Act compelling notification of infectious disease. This Act was passed in 1879 in the face of much medical opposition, which held that notification interfered with the confidence between doctor and patient, a position which at the present day seems utterly untenable.

About 1880 the University introduced the principle of appointing lecturers in subjects which did not appear to require the prolonged instruction of a professor, or for which professorial endowment was not available. The first of these was Sir Thomas Smith Clouston, lecturer on mental diseases, appointed in 1879, and the second Douglas Argyll Robertson, lecturer on diseases of the eye, appointed in 1883. Since that time the number of lecturers has greatly expanded in the University, although the number in the Extra-Mural School has considerably diminished.

DISCUSSION.

Professor Edwin Bramwell spoke of the changes in the Edinburgh Medical School since the days of the great teachers and masters of the past, whose portraits had appeared on the screen. He remembered hearing a consulting surgeon to the Royal Infirmary say, at a meeting of this Society, that during the fifteen years he had been on the active staff he had never opened an abdomen. Surgical technique had made vast strides during recent decades but medicine was again coming to the fore. Dr Comrie had emphasised the very important place taken by the extra-mural school in the 'eighties and 'nineties when the school was at the height of its fame. In the 'nineties there were four or five physicians, and a similar number of surgeons and gynæcologists and obstetricians, conducting systematic courses of a hundred lectures, and many of the University students attended a second course on each

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subject. The assistant physicians and surgeons in those days saw little of the students, for they took no part in the teaching in the wards or in the clinical lectures unless in the absence of their chiefs. At that time the numbers attending the individual clinics were unlimited and the University professors and extra-mural lecturers gave two independent courses of clinical lectures in the Royal Infirmary, either of which the University student might attend. Some years ago the desirability of teaching clinically to small numbers at the bed-side was recognised; the students were now, as they knew, divided among the various charges and the assistants took an active part in the teaching. Competitive systematic and clinical teaching was a thing of the past.

In conclusion, Professor Bramwell spoke of the development of post-graduate teaching. He was convinced that before many years had passed every school of medicine would have its post-graduate school and would take post-graduate teaching just as seriously as undergraduate teaching was taken at present. They had all the facilities in Edinburgh for the making of a great post-graduate school, and he hoped that this vision would soon be realised.