

KING'S COLLEGE. ABERDEEN, ABOUT 1661

(From Gordon of Rothemay's plan of Aberdeen)

THE MEDICAL SCHOOL OF ABERDEEN

ALTHOUGH the University of Edinburgh was later in its inception than any of the other three, medicine developed earlier at Edinburgh and was more particularly cultivated than in any of the other towns. The University of St. Andrews was founded in the beginning of the 15th century, Glasgow was founded in the middle, and Aberdeen at its close, while Edinburgh University was not founded until a century later, in 1582. As we have seen, however, the Guild of Surgeons and Barbers at Edinburgh was a well-established teaching body by 1505.

The craft of the "Barbours" is mentioned casually several times in the early minutes of the Aberdeen Town Council. Aberdeen received from William the Lion, in the 12th century, a Charter authorising the burgesses to trade, and several important monasteries were founded within its bounds, to one of which, the Trinity Friars, King William gave up his own palace in the Green. The gradual acquisition of medical knowledge by the barbers and their formation into a semi-religious craft would therefore be easy. A Council minute of 10th October, 1494, refers to payment of twenty shillings for the "barbours obeytis,"¹ and on 30th January, 1505, the craft is mentioned as taking part in a pageant.² The place of the barbers among the other crafts was a humble one, as appears from their position in the great procession of Corpus Christi Day in 1531, when the barbers walked next to the fleshers, who came lowest in precedence, the hammermen taking the chief position among the seventeen crafts mentioned. In the pageant the barbers represented "Saint Lowrance and his Tormentouris."³ The Guild of Barbers was incorporated by the Town Council in 1537.⁴ Military surgery must have been an important part of the craft, for Aberdeen was an active centre, both during the War of Independence against the English and during the raids by caterans from the north-west, which culminated in the repulse of the Highland hosts at Harlaw in 1411.

There had been a Rector of the Schools at Aberdeen as early as 1262, and numerous subsequent references are found to the Grammar School of Aberdeen. In 1494, Bishop Elphinstone of Aberdeen, obtained permission for the establishment of a "studium generale," or University, in his episcopal See. The Pope thus bestowed the usual privileges of a University, which were to teach, study and confer degrees in theology, canon and civil law, medicine and arts.

¹ p. 55, ² p. 432: "Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1398-1570," Aberdeen, 1844.

³ "Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen," p. 451.

⁴ Parker: "Early History of Surgery in Great Britain," London, 1920, p. 93.

Bishop Elphinstone collected a collegiate body and obtained its endowment by his own means and influence, while the young King James IV made a small donation and consented to the annexation of the hospital of St. Germain's to assist the revenues. The Bishop's first efforts were to restore the Cathedral and to collect an establishment of forty-two clerics and scholars. The erection of the College of St. Mary of the Nativity, later named King's College, after King James IV, followed in 1500.¹ The first principal was Hector Boece, a native of Forfarshire, who had been a teacher of philosophy in the College Montaigu at Paris. King's College appears to have been completed in the year 1505. With regard to the size of the University, some information is got from a letter written by Randolph, the English Ambassador, who, in 1562, accompanied Queen Mary on a northern progress. He wrote to Cecil from Aberdeen, "The Quene, in her progresse, is now come as far as Olde Aberdine, the Bishop's seat, and where also the Universitie is, or at the least, one college with fiftene or sixteen scollers."²

From the beginning, one of the teachers at King's College was a "Mediciner." Thus it was secured that medicine should form an intrinsic part in the teaching of the University, and this was the first University recognition of the subject in Great Britain. Cambridge followed in 1540, Oxford in 1546, and Glasgow in 1637, but Edinburgh did not follow this example until 1685, when three Professors of Medicine were appointed in the Town's College.

The creation of a Chair in medicine must not be misinterpreted, and the whole relations subsisting between a University and medicine in the 16th and 17th centuries will be better understood if the duties of the mediciner are grasped. The study of medicine was, as has been mentioned in connection with the monasteries, regarded as an important branch of scholarship. At this time it was usual for well-educated men to include a knowledge of physic among their literary and philosophical studies, even when there was no intention of adopting medicine as a profession. In outlying districts of the country where the common people were poor and where roads were bad or non-existent, it was difficult for one who practised medicine as his only means of sustenance to exist at all, or, in any case, to visit his patients.

The persons, therefore, who rendered help in time of sickness in country districts, both before and after the Reformation, were the local clergymen or land-owners, who had attended the course at a University and knew something about the medical writings. The students who attended the three or four years required to complete the "studium generale," like the ancient philosophers, took all knowledge for their province. At Edinburgh, as appears from a report by the Commissioners of 1648 to the General Assembly, the anatomy of the human body was described in the third year's course of Arts, while at St. Andrews, in the

¹ "Fasti Aberdonenses, 1494-1854," Spalding Club Pub., Aberdeen, 1854, p. v *et seq.*

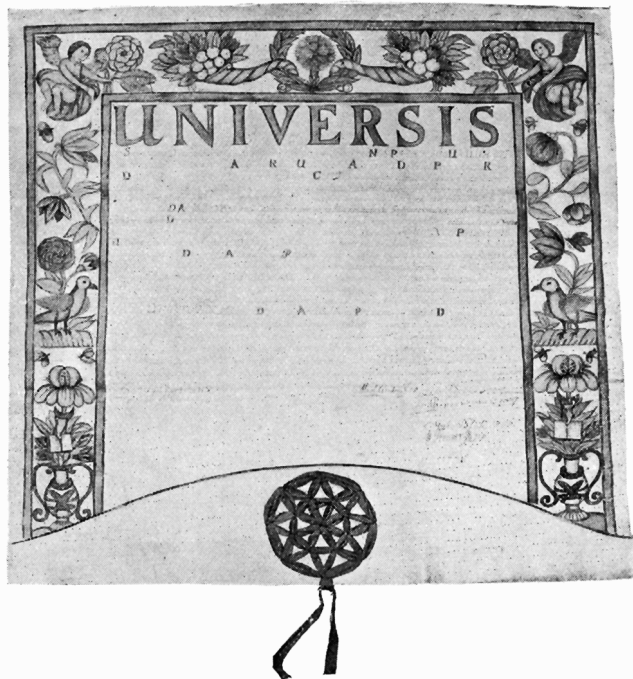
² Letter to Cecil, 31st August, 1562, quoted in Chalmers' "Life of Ruddiman," p. 7 (note).

last year, the students learned some compend of anatomy, and at Aberdeen some instruction in anatomy and physic was given, apparently at the discretion of the mediciner. The successive mediciners varied in the extent of medicine which they taught to their students, some of them regarding the post as purely titular.

This attitude on the part of the Universities towards the teaching of medicine was reflected in the matter of degrees, when these came to be conferred. The aim was to produce not a practitioner but a scholar, not craftsmanship but erudition. Instruction in medicine, while it might be slight, was associated with a course in arts and philosophy.

The person who received a degree was *doctus in medicina*—learned in medicine—but not necessarily a skilled practitioner of the craft. At the University, the same professor often taught medicine with Oriental languages or with mathematics. In the early days, Greek, Latin and Arabic were the languages in which medical knowledge was stored, and from the 17th century onwards the systems of medicine which men strove to establish had a distinct physical or mathematical trend. When a degree in medicine was conferred, it was not given because

of examinations which the student had successfully passed, but as a recognition by the University of general and professional attainments, however acquired. It did not convey the idea of a licence to practise, and it was frequently conferred as an honorary distinction. Thus, the first name mentioned as having received the degree of M.D. from King's College is that of Dr. Joannes Glover, Londonensis, who graduated on 15th May, 1654, and who was already a B.A. of Harvard (1650).¹



DIPLOMA OF M.D. DEGREE

Conferred on Dr. Archibald Pitcairne by King's College, Aberdeen, signed by Patrick Urquhart, M.D., and dated 7th August, 1699

(Preserved in the Royal Scottish Museum of Antiquities)

¹ "Studies in Hist. and Development of the University of Aberdeen," Ed. P. J. Anderson, p. 308.

Examples of the manner in which the M.D. degree was given for purely honorary reasons and *in absentia* are afforded by two minutes of the Principall and Maisters. "31st May, 1712:—Mr. Patrick Blair, apothecary in Cupar, who had been recommended by the bishop of Aberdeen and severall eminent physicians

in Angus, was graduated Doctor of Medicine."

"10th November, 1719, this day, the masters signed a diploma, *gratis*, in favours of Mr. Alexander Anderson, minister at Duffus, as Doctor of Medicine, he being a gentleman of approven skill of physick, as also his father having been once regent, and his grandfather Mr. John Rou, once Principall in this University."¹



JOHN ARBUTHNOT (1667-1735)

(Original in the Royal Scottish National Portrait Gallery)

In Marischal College, the first recorded doctor is Richard Stoughton, in 1713; two others, Joseph Cam and John Spink, graduated in 1714, and were already licentiates of the Archbishoprick of Canterbury, while for many years those who graduated appear to have been men who had already been for a considerable time in practice or who had published works on medicine and were, in any

case, men of recognised distinction.² The same principle applies to the other Universities. At Edinburgh the first M.D. was David Cockburn, A.M., who graduated on 14th May, 1705, and there were twenty-one graduates in medicine prior to 1726, the year in which a Medical Faculty was established in this University.³ In Glasgow

¹ "Fasti Aberdonenses of King's College, 1494-1854," Spalding Club, 1854, pp. 442-444.

² "Records of Marischal College," Vol. II, p. 111.

³ "Edinburgh Medical Graduates," Edinburgh, 1867.

University the first M.D. degree appears to have been conferred in 1703, and degrees were even conferred on applicants *in absentia*. At St. Andrews University, Dr. John Arbuthnot was the first recorded M.D. He graduated in 1696 and underwent examination. He had studied at Marischal College, Aberdeen, where he graduated in Arts in 1681.¹ In later life he practised in London, being physician to Queen Anne, and the familiar friend of Pope and Swift. St. Andrews University for long continued the custom of conferring degrees only after examination, but without any residence or instruction at the University.

It was not until after the foundation of a Medical Faculty at Edinburgh, in 1726, that the idea came into being in Scotland of conferring the M.D. degree on young men as the consummation of three years' medical study, and to which they were entitled after successful examination.

The following is the list of mediciners at King's College, with their dates of appointment:—

Before	1522	James Cumyne
	1522	Robert Gray
	1556	Gilbert Skeen
	1619	Dr. Patrick Dun
	1632	Dr. William Gordon
	1640	Chair vacant
	1649	Dr. Andrew Moore
	1672	Dr. Patrick Urquhart
	1725	Dr. James Gregory (elder)
	1732	Dr. James Gregory (younger)
	1755	Dr. John Gregory
	1766	Sir Alexander Gordon of Lesmore
	1782	Dr. William Chalmers
	1793	Sir Alexander Burnett Bannerman
	1813	Dr. James Bannerman
	1839	Dr. William Gregory
	1844	Dr. Andrew Fyfe

Master James Cumyne had been brought to Aberdeen about the year 1503 to act as medical officer of the burgh. The Magistrates, on 20th October, 1503, agreed to pay him a retaining fee of ten merks yearly, and later one half of the net fishings at the fords of Dee, on condition that he should "mak personale residence within the said burgh, and cum and vesy tham that beis seik, and schow them his medicin, one thar expensis." It was also stipulated that his "wyf, houshalde and bairnis" should be brought to reside in the burgh. He was evidently, from his title of "Master," a University graduate.²

¹ "Records of Marischal College," Vol. II, p. 253.

² "Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen," p. 431.

Cumyne seems also to have received from the Royal Exchequer a grant mentioned in the year 1502, and continued in subsequent years. It was paid through the Bishop of Aberdeen and charged against the Burgh of Cullen, though the name of the recipient is never stated. "To a doctor graduated in the Faculty of Medicine, reading in the University at Aberdeen, newly founded in the city of Old Aberdeen, receiving annually twelve pounds six shillings from the concession of the King" (James IV.).¹

Gilbert Skeen, or Skeyne, was born about the year 1522, and after the usual education at the Grammar School and King's College, he took a Master of Arts degree and applied himself to the study of medicine, being appointed mediciner to King's College in 1556. While occupying this position, he published "Ane Breve Descriptioun of the Pest," printed at Edinburgh in 1568. Having married, in 1569, Agnes Lawson, the widow of a burghess of Edinburgh, he transferred to this city in 1575 and commenced the practice of medicine in a house at Niddrie Wynd, Edinburgh. Here he rose to considerable celebrity, and on 16th June, 1581, he was appointed physician to His Majesty James VI., receiving a "gift of pension" of "twa hundreth pundis money of our realme."² Another small treatise, entitled "Ane Brief Descriptioun



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of the Qualiteis and Effectis of the Well of the Woman Hill besyde Abirdene, Anno Do. 1580," is also attributed to him.³ He died in 1599.

Gilbert Skeen lived through the worst outbreak of the plâgue in Edinburgh, but his brief description of the pest, though printed in 1568 at Edinburgh, was written before he left Aberdeen. It is interesting, also, as one of the few examples of books published by Scottish doctors or surgeons in the 16th century, and, like the "Chyrurgerie" of Maister Peter Lowe, it is written in the vernacular. Their vernacular language was also employed about this time by Ambrose Paré, the great Elizabethan surgeons, and Richard Wiseman. This practice gave to such works, unlike those written in Latin, a greater usefulness though a narrower circulation at their time, but conferred on them a more enduring fame. The little treatise on the plague runs to about 10,000 words. The following are Skeen's views as to the cause of plague:—

¹ "Exchequer Rolls of Scotland," Vol. XII, p. 106.

² "Tracts by Dr. Gilbert Skeyne, Medicinar to His Majesty," Bannatyne Club Reprint, Edinburgh, 1860, pp. vii-ix.

³ See reprint in facsimile, Edmond & Spark, Aberdeen, 1884.

“The cause of pest in ane privat Citie is stinkand corruptioun and filth, quihilkis occupis the commune streittis and gaittis, greit reik of colis (*smoke of coals*) without vnder to dispache the sam, corruptioun of Herbis, sic as Caill and growand Treis, Moist heuie sauer (*smell*) of Lynt, Hemp, & Ledder steipit in Vater. Ane priuat house infectis ather of stinkand closettis, or corrupte Carioun thairin, or neir by, or gif the inhabitantis hes inuiseit vther infectit Rowmis, or drinking corrupte Vatter, eating of Fruttis, or vder meitctis quihilkis ar corrupte, as we see dalie the pure mair subiecte to sic calamitie, nor the potent, quaha ar constrynit be pouertie to eit ewill and corrupte meittis, and diseisis contractit heirof ar callit Pandemiall.”¹

The diagnostic signs of plague are given by him as follows, and he also has a long section upon the signs of death:—

“Thair is mony notis quihilkis schauis ane man infectit be pest. First gif the exterior partis of the bodie be caulde, and the interior partis of the bodie vehement hait. As gif the hoill bodie be heauie with oft scharpe punctiounis, stinkand sueiting tyritnes of bodie, ganting of mowthe, detestable brathe with greit difficultie, at sumtyme vehement feuer rather on nycht nor day. Greit doloure of heid with heaynes, sollicitude & sadnes of mynd: greit displeour with sowning (*swooning*), quahairefter followis haistelie deth. As greit appetit and propensnes to sleip albeit on day, rauing and walking occupis the last. Cruell inspectioun of the ene, quihilkis apperis of sindre colouris, maist variant dolour of the stomak inlak of appetite, vehement doloure of heart, with greit attractioun of Air: intolerable thirst, frequent vomitting of diuers colouris or greit appetit by daylie accustum to Vomit, without effecte: Bitternes of mowth, and toung with blaiknit colour thairof & greit drouth: frequent puls small & profund quahais vrine for the maist part is turbide thik & stinkand or first vaterie colourit thairefter of bilious colour, last confusit and turbide, or at the beginning is zallow inclyning to greine (callit citrine colour) and confusit, thairefter becummis reid without contentis. Albeit sum of thir properteis may be sene in hail mennis vater, quhairby mony ar deceauit abydand Helth of the patient, quhan sic vater is maist manifest sing of deth, because the hail venome & cause coniunit thairwith, leauand the naturall partis occupis the hart and nobillest interiore partis of the body. Last of all and maiste certane, gif with constant feuer, by the earis, vnder the oxtaris, or by the secrete membres maist frequentlie apperis apostumis (*abscesses*) callit Bubones, without ony other manifest cause, or gif the charbunkil apperis hastelie in ony other part, quihilk gif it dois, in the beginning, testifeis strenthe of nature helth, and the laitter sic thingis appeir, and apperand, it is the mair deidlie. At sumtym in ane criticall day mony accidentis apperis principalie vomiteing, spitting of blude, with sweit, flux of womb, bylis, scabe with dyuers other symptomtis, maist heauie and detestable.”²

The chief part of the little book is devoted to the means by which those exposed to plague may avoid infection, and to the treatment which Skeen has found useful in cases of the plague:—

“Euacuatioun is perfitit be blude drawing, befoir or efter that ony persone hes bene in suspect place, in speciall of the Vaine callit Mediana of the richt arme takand in quantitie as strenth, temperament, consuetude, aige, and tyme may suffir. Euerilk ane remouand

¹ pp. 6 and 7, ² pp. 12-14, “Tracts by Dr. Gilbert Skeyne,” reprinted by The Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1860.

thame self fra cuntrey, town, and Air, infectit or suspect and quha may not do the samyn, or mowit be Christiane Cheritie will not, man be studious to liue in fre Air. . . ."¹

"Fyre made of fir or akin tymmer ar maist lowable, makand suffumigatioun thairwith of the tre of Aloes, Calamus callit Aromaticall. . . ."

"Perfumand also al claithis in priuat lugeingis with the reik of sandal, rose vater or sic lyke other materialis. And as ony of the simplis befor written seruiss, siclyk compositionis may be maide of the sam, in forme of trociseis, thik pulderis, candillis or pomis odoratiue in this maner. Rec. storac, calamint. vnc. duas, rasuræ ligni Iuniperj vnc. sex. masticis vnc. vnam, benio. vnc. duas, paretur, puluis. . . ."²

"Four scrupulis of the pil. of Ruffus ar maist profitable, quhilkis beand tane oft befor (sayis Ruffus) preseruiss maist surlie fra the pest, & ar callit be some, pilulæ communes, be vtheris pilulæ Arabicæ, vel pilulæ contra pestem, quhilkis are dyuerse vaysis dispensit, as followis. Rec. aloes Hepatici partes duas, ammoniaci electissimi partes duas, myrrhæ electæ partem vnam, cum vino odorato formentur. . . ."³

"Twichand meittis, flesche is maist proper quhilk generis louable humoris, & is of facill digestioun, Sic as Pertrik, Phasiane, Lauerok (*lark*), Hen, Turture, Kid, Mottoun, Cuning (*rabbit*), Veill, & siclyk otheris, vsand thairwith Garyophillis (*cloves*), and Cannell pulderit. . . ."⁴

The part devoted to the cure contains a great many prescriptions for ointments, mixtures, plasters, etc., which are almost all derived from vegetable sources and are mainly of the nature of volatile oils.

"Of fructis, feggis, bytter almondis, dry rasingis, sower apill or peir, orange, citroun, or limown, caperis, soure prunis, or cheryis, with daylie use of vinagir or vergeus with all sortis of meittis: drinkand cleir quhyt odoratiue Vyne, temperat with vater, veschand face, mouthe, & handis, at morning with vyne temperat with rois vater, drawand at neis the decoctioun, of the leauis of laure, onyand the iris with oile de spica, hauand in mouthe the seid of citroun, abstenand fra sleip on day lycht, Ire, crying, Venus playis, as fra maist dangerous enemeis."⁵

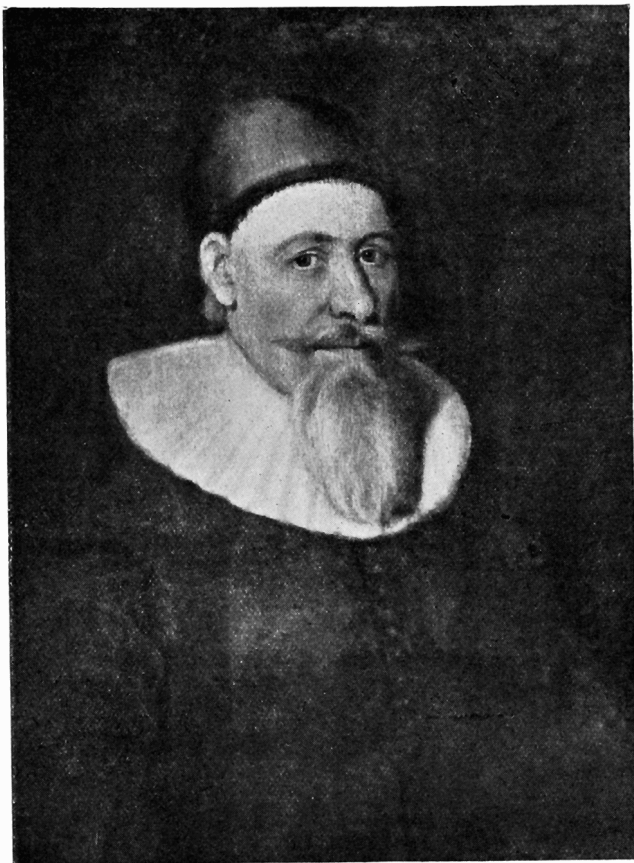
With regard to the treatment of the bubos, he recommends early opening by a "chirurgical hand," after which various maturative materials or suppurratives may be applied, for which he gives several prescriptions, again consisting of aromatic substances. Gangrene, which he says is wont to appear, also demands the hand of the surgeon, and is to be treated by maturatives and washed with turpentine spirit and other substances which we should call antiseptics. A curative plaster is finally to be applied.

Patrick Dun, a native of Aberdeen, was M.D. of Basel, and held office both in King's and Marischal Colleges. He was a benefactor both of the Grammar School and of Marischal College, to which he gave 2000 merks for repair of damage

¹ p. 18, ² p. 19, ³ p. 23, ⁴ p. 25, ⁵ p. 26: "Tracts by Dr. Gilbert Skeyne."

caused by a fire in 1639. In the latter College he held successively the posts of Regent, Professor of Logic (1610), Rector (1619) and Principal (1621). He was the author of "Themata medica de dolore colico," Basel (1607), and edited Liddell's "Ars conservandi sanitatem" (1651).¹

William Gordon, mediciner at King's College in the year 1636, appears to have taken a serious view of his duties, and in this year petitioned the Lords of the Privy Council, that seeing he was appointed to teach medicine and anatomy, and had exercised his students sufficiently for two years past in the dissection of beasts, he desired the Lords to give him opportunities for the practical teaching of human anatomy. He mentions in his petition that it was usual for the Magistrates of cities in which Universities were situated to deliver two bodies of men and two of women in each year to be publicly anatomised. The Privy Council met his request by directing the Sheriffs, Provost and Baillies of Aberdeen and Banff to deliver to the suppliant two bodies of executed malefactors, especially of rebels or outlaws, or failing that, bodies of the poorer sort, who had few friends or acquaintances to take exception.² Some of his successors in the post, however, were less thorough in their desire to teach, and some of them gave up lecturing on medicine altogether.



PATRICK DUN (Died 1649)

(Original picture, by Jamesone, in the Grammar School, Aberdeen)

¹ "Records of Marischal College," New Spalding Club, 1898, Vol. II, p. 28, and Vol. I, p. 231.

² "Miscellany of the Spalding Club," Aberdeen, 1842, Vol. II, p. 71.



ARTHUR JOHNSTON, M.D. (1587-1641)



ROBERT MORISON, M.D. (1620-1683)

A distinguished Rector of King's College, in 1637 (though not a mediciner), was Arthur Johnston (1587-1641), of Caskieben (now called Keith Hall, near Inverurie), who had taken the M.D. of Padua in 1610. He became physician-in-ordinary to Charles I., and his talent as a writer of Latin verse was pronounced by some authorities to be superior to that of George Buchanan. He had practised medicine in France, and his famous translation of the Psalms was published at Aberdeen in 1637, although his duties as Court Physician kept him mainly in England. Numerous other Aberdonians of this period were celebrated as medical practitioners outside Aberdeen, such as Robert Straloch, who taught medicine at Paris; Gilbert Jack (1578-1628), who taught at Leyden and published the "*Institutiones Medicæ*"; Alexander Reid, physician to Charles I., who published treatises on anatomy and surgery (1634); and Robert Morison (1620-1683), physician to Charles II., and professor of botany in Oxford.¹

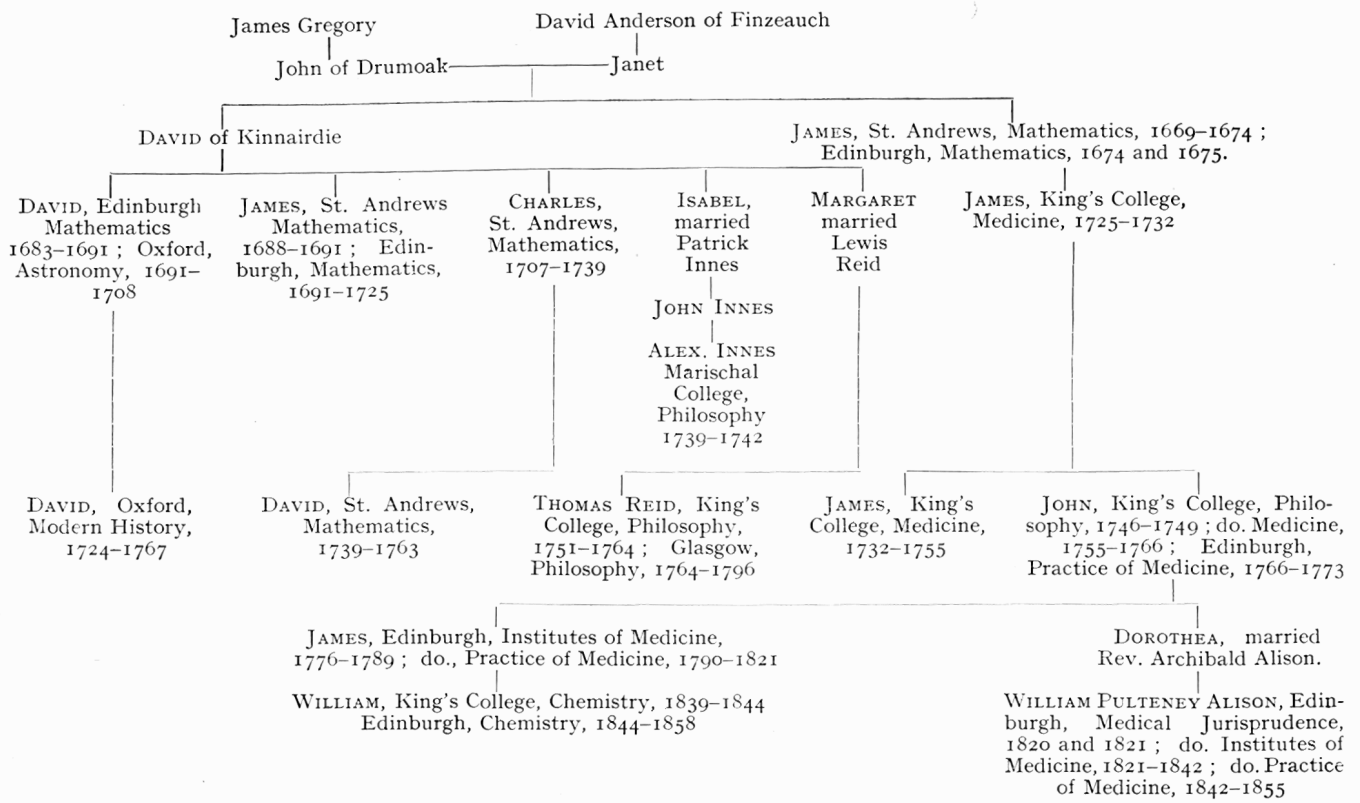
Among the mediciners of King's College are four of the family of Gregory. This family produced no fewer than sixteen professors in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and other Universities. The earliest to attain professorial rank was James Gregory, professor of mathematics in St. Andrews and Edinburgh, who married a daughter of George Jamesone, the Scottish Vandyke. His son, Professor James Gregory, the elder, became mediciner at King's College in 1725, and was succeeded by his son James Gregory, the younger, who in turn was followed as mediciner by his younger brother, Dr. John Gregory, who for a time had been professor of natural philosophy in King's College. This Dr. John Gregory was also one of the early physicians of the Aberdeen Infirmary. He had begun life by working in the shop of his brother, a chemist of Aberdeen, and thus obtained a thorough knowledge of drugs. He also studied at Leyden before finally settling down in Aberdeen. Thinking Aberdeen too small for the exercise of his abilities, he tried medical practice in London for twelve months, and eventually settled in Edinburgh, where he was elected to the Chair of Medicine in 1766, in succession to Robert Whytt. He in turn was succeeded in the Edinburgh Chair by the illustrious William Cullen. The part of his career spent in Aberdeen is better known than that in Edinburgh, because, in the latter place, he was overshadowed by his more distinguished son, James Gregory, who succeeded Cullen as Professor of Medicine in 1790.

The Gregorys were of the same family as the MacGregors, and at the time of the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, Rob Roy, who was hiding in Aberdeenshire, paid an uninvited visit to his cousin, the mediciner of King's College. Seeing young James Gregory, then a sturdy child, he declared he would take James with him to the Highlands and "make a man of him." The respectable mediciner of King's College was horrified at the idea, and was much relieved when, as he was walking

¹ "Studies in the History of the University of Aberdeen," Edited by P. J. Anderson, M.A.; Article on "Four Centuries of Medicine in Aberdeen," Stephenson, Aberdeen, 1906, pp. 305 and 306.

FAMILY OF GREGORY

Showing the number of Professors, with their Universities, Chairs and dates of tenure.



As compiled by Anderson for "Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis," Vol. I., p. 203.

one day with Rob Roy in the Castlegate, a troop of soldiers appeared from the barracks. "If those lads are stirring, I had better be off," said the cateran, and disappeared up a neighbouring Close and so from Aberdeen, leaving James Gregory to become ultimately a celebrated Edinburgh professor.¹ Dr. John Gregory, in his early days, had studied at Leyden with a little group of Scottish students, which also included the Rev. Alexander Carlyle, later of Inveresk, who, in his autobiography, gives an account of this University, the favourite resort for Scottish students of the time.² Carlyle describes John Gregory, when tried by the ardent spirits of Edinburgh, as being adjudged "cold, selfish and cunning," and pretending to "professional arts to get into business." This, however, he denies, and having had him as family physician at a later period, he found Gregory "friendly, affectionate and generous."³

John Gregory published "The Elements of the Practice of Physic," but is better known as the author of "Lectures on the Duties and Qualifications of a Physician," published in 1772. This was a series of six lectures delivered to his students and intended as a guide to recently qualified practitioners for their conduct in practice. Although somewhat diffuse, after the manner of writings of the

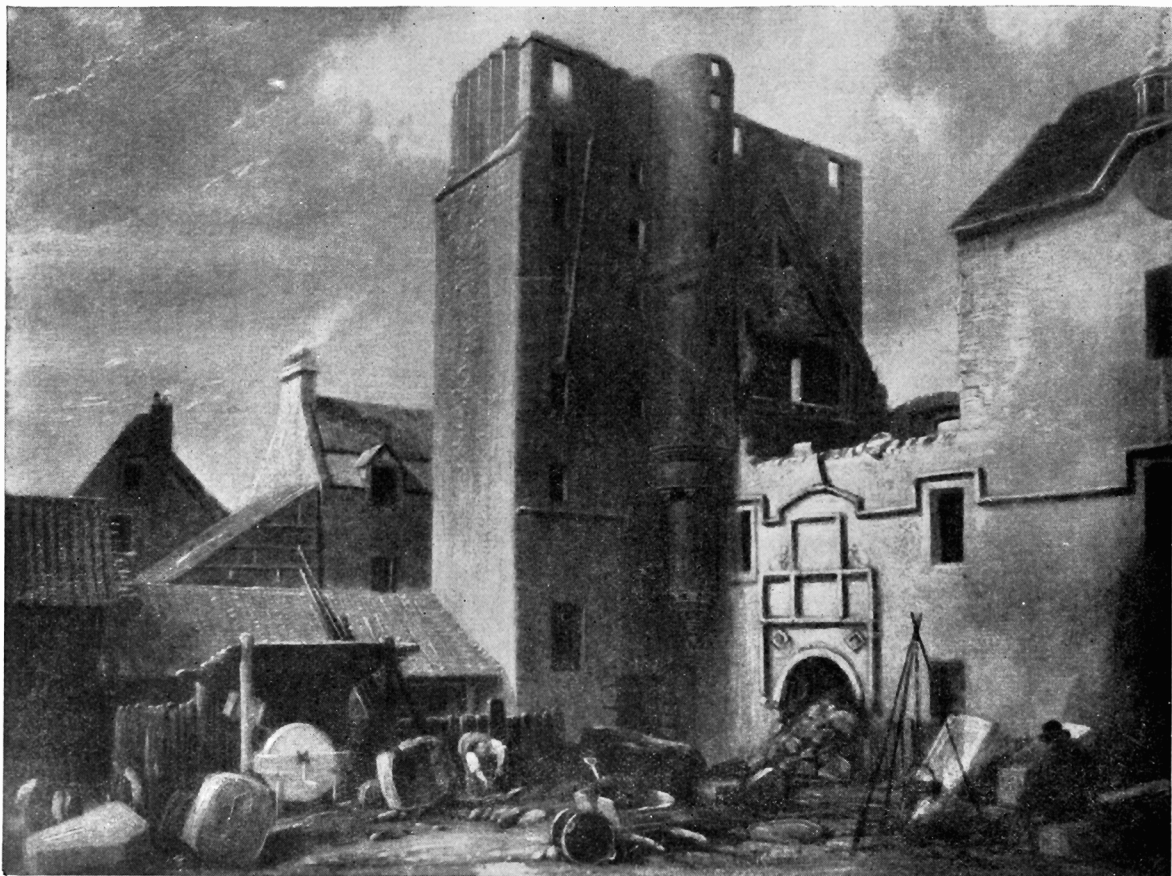


JAMES GREGORY, M.A. (ABERDEEN) (1638-1675)
Professor of Mathematics in St. Andrews and Edinburgh, and the first
Professor of this family

¹ E. H. B. Rodger: "Aberdeen Doctors," 1893, p. 75. This story is also told by Sir Walter Scott in his introduction to "Rob Roy."

² "Autobiography of the Rev. Alexander Carlyle," Edinburgh, 1860.

³ Carlyle: Op. cit., pp. 178 and 179.



OLD MARISCHAL COLLEGE

In process of demolition in 1840

(Original painting by Auld, in the University of Aberdeen)

18th century generally, it is still well worth reading.¹ The following quotation, which is the last paragraph of the book, gives a general idea of the whole :—

“ I hope I have advanced no opinions in these lectures that tend to lessen the dignity of a profession which has always been considered as most honourable and important. But, I apprehend, this dignity is not to be supported by a narrow, selfish, corporation-spirit ; by self-importance ; a formality in dress and manners ; or by an affectation of mystery. The true dignity of physic is to be maintained by the superior learning and abilities of those who profess it, by the liberal manners of gentlemen, and by that openness and candour, which disdain all artifice, which invite to a free enquiry, and thus boldly bid defiance to all that illiberal ridicule and abuse to which medicine has been so much and so long exposed.”

Gregory's works in four volumes were published after his death at Edinburgh in 1778.

After John Gregory left Aberdeen in 1766, the duties of the mediciner at King's College appear to have been carried out with little energy. It is said that the two Bannermans, who held the post from 1793 to 1838, never lectured.²

On the death of the younger Bannerman, William Gregory, grandson of Dr. John Gregory, was appointed to the post of mediciner. William Gregory took a special interest in chemistry, and five years later, in 1844, was appointed professor of chemistry in Edinburgh University, when he was succeeded at King's College by Andrew Fyfe, who had been assistant to Professor Hope in Edinburgh. Fyfe became Professor of Chemistry at the University of Aberdeen in 1860.

Marischal College and University was founded on the site of the Greyfriars Monastery by George Keith, 5th Earl Marischal of Scotland, in 1593, out of the former possessions of the Grey Friars, Black Friars and White Friars of Aberdeen, because of his knowledge of the lack of means in the north of Scotland for obtaining a liberal and Christian education. The Earls Marischal continued as hereditary Chancellors of this College until their forfeiture following the Rebellion of 1715. William, 9th Earl Marischal, erected a professorship of medicine in Marischal College on 8th August, 1700, and nominated for the post Mr. Patrick Chalmers of Fedrett, M.D., “ to be Professor of Medicine in our Colledge and University.”³ No remuneration apparently was attached to the post, but on 31st May, 1712, Queen Anne granted £210 from the Civil List to the Principal and Professors of Marischal and King's Colleges for the augmentation of their salaries. The share of the professor of medicine at Marischal College appears to have been £10 10s. yearly.⁴

¹ John Gregory : “ Lectures on the Duties and Qualifications of a Physician,” London, 1772.

² “ Studies in the History of the University,” Edited by P. J. Anderson, Aberdeen, 1906, p. 312.

³ “ Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis,” New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1889. Edited by P. J. Anderson, M.A., LL.B., Vol. I, p. 381.

⁴ Op. cit., p. 395.

In 1717, the Crown nominated Dr. Matthew Mackaile to succeed Chalmers, who had been ejected by the Commission of Visitation, probably in consequence of Jacobite sympathies. The following is a list of the professors of medicine in Marischal College, with their dates of appointment :—

1700	Patrick Chalmers
1717	Matthew Mackaile
1734	James Gordon
1755	Alexander Donaldson
1793	William Livingston
1823	Charles Skene
1839	John Macrobin

Their duties were probably very similar to those of the mediciners in the neighbouring King's College, although they appear to have carried these out with greater energy.

The ledger of Patrick Chalmers has been preserved, and some of its details afford an interesting picture of the work and especially of the remuneration of a physician in Aberdeen at the close of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries.



SEAL OF MARISCHAL COLLEGE
ABERDEEN

Chalmers settled in Aberdeen in medical practice in the year 1682, having already studied medicine according to the practice of the time at the Universities of Leyden, Paris and Padua, in each of which Universities he took the M.D. degree. His professional income appears to have increased from £384 16s. Scots in 1684, to £1084 2s. 2d. in 1694. This was, however, a particularly good year, and his average income seems to have been about £600 Scots. His patients included many of the county families of Aberdeenshire. Among the diseases most frequently mentioned in the ledger are fever and ague, rheumatism, scrofula, pleurisy, cholera, flux, smallpox and hydroptic. There are frequent entries of

payments by the Earle of Aberdeen, including one of £67 in 1686, and the fees vary from sums of about this amount to £8 for delivery and medical attendance on a baillie's wife, and £6 paid by Captain David Garioch for "drunkenness." There are frequent entries of accounts to ladies for cure of "the vapours," and ague seems to have been a very common complaint. The Sheriff of Murray paid £6 9s. for treatment of the itch, and Mrs. Helen Leslie for vapours and itch, £6 6s.; while Mrs. Duncan "in gratitude for her salvation" paid £12 18s. Presents in kind seem often to have been tendered by way of payment, from meal and malt down to a hat in 1692.

These presents are duly valued and entered, and their amount varied from £40 down to £9 in the year.¹

Matthew Mackaile was also regent in 1729. He was the son of the better known Matthew Mackaile, an apothecary and burghess of Edinburgh, who later practised in Aberdeen and who was the author of several books, especially one on "The Diversite of Salts and Spirits" (1683), and another dealing with the waters of Moffat and of St. Catherine's Well near Liberton (1664).² The father's portrait hangs in the Great Hall at Marischal College.

James Gordon was the son of Dr. John Gordon, a physician of Aberdeen.³

Alexander Donaldson succeeded his father as professor of Oriental languages in 1754, and continued to hold this post along with that of mediciner till his death in 1793.⁴

William Livingston was the son of Dr. Thomas Livingston, a physician of Aberdeen.⁵ He was an early President of the Medical Society, and its library and museum were kept in his house.

Charles Skene was a son of George Skene, professor of natural history.⁶

John Macrobin was an M.D. of Edinburgh. When the two Colleges were united in 1860, Macrobin became Professor of Practice of Medicine in the University of Aberdeen. He was the author of an "Introduction to the Study of Practical Medicine."⁷

King's and Marischal Colleges co-existed for a long period as independent and rival institutions, but an attempt was made during the reign of Charles I, in 1641, to combine them into one academic body. This attempt, however, appears to have been abortive, and they again fell apart. Various attempts at rapprochement were made from time to time. Thus, in a scheme of union in 1707, a joint school of medicine was a prominent feature. Again, in 1818, an attempt which lasted for some years was made to combine the two medical schools. In 1826, a Commission was appointed by Sir Robert Peel to investigate the state of affairs in the Scottish Universities, and their report in 1830 suggested that in Aberdeen the fusion of the two Colleges would create an efficient Medical School. A Bill was proposed in 1836, under the title "The United University of Aberdeen," but, owing to opposition, was withdrawn, and local jealousies kept the two schools apart until their final fusion in 1860.⁸

At Marischal College, professors of chemistry had existed in the persons of George French, appointed in 1793, and Thomas Clark, appointed in 1833. Dr. George French, the son of an Aberdeen advocate, was one of the surgeons

¹ John I. Chalmers: "Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland," Vol. IV, pp. 181-185.

² "Aberdeen Public Library Catalogue of Local Collection," p. 226.

³, ⁴, ⁵, ⁶, ⁷ "Records of Marischal College," New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1898, Vol. II, pp. 55 and 56.

⁸ J. Scott Riddell: "Records of the Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society," Aberdeen, 1922, p. 46 *et seq.*

to the Infirmary and a physician in Aberdeen. Prior to being made Professor of Chemistry, he and Dr. Livingston, afterwards Professor of Medicine, had proposed, in 1786, to give a six months' course of clinical lectures at the Infirmary. He was succeeded in 1833 in the Chair of Chemistry by Professor Thomas Clark, an M.D. of Glasgow. Clark's health broke down in 1843, and his class was conducted by a number of substitutes, one of whom, James Smith Brazier, lectured to the class from 1852, and also conducted that of Professor Fyfe at King's College in 1854, becoming later Professor of Chemistry in the University of Aberdeen in succession to Professor Fyfe, in 1862.¹

Dr. Macrobin, as professor of medicine, and Dr. Thomas Clark, as Professor of Chemistry, appear to have been active teachers, and, in the year 1839, two new Chairs were founded by Queen Victoria, that of anatomy, to which Dr. Allen Thomson was appointed, and that of surgery, of which Dr. Pirrie was made professor. Professor Pirrie was the author of a treatise on "Principles and Practice of Surgery" (1852), and in 1860 he became Professor of Surgery in the University of Aberdeen.² In the Chair of Anatomy, Allen Thomson, who resigned the Chair at Marischal College in 1841 to take up the professorship of physiology at Edinburgh, was succeeded by Alexander Jardine Lizars, previously an Edinburgh lecturer and author of "Elements of Anatomy" (1844), who continued in office as Professor of Anatomy in the University of Aberdeen after 1860.³

In 1857, a Chair of Medical Logic and Medical Jurisprudence was founded, Francis Ogston, who had been lecturing on medical jurisprudence since 1839, was appointed. He was the author of "Lectures on Medical Jurisprudence" (1878), and, in 1860, he continued in office as Professor in the University of Aberdeen.⁴

The following is a list, so far as known, of lecturers in connection with the Medical School at Aberdeen up to the year 1860. Some of these were connected with King's College, others with Marischal College, while some were independent :—

1758	Dr. David Skene	...	...	...	Midwifery
	(In 1759, the Kirk Session of Old Machar published a recommendation of Dr. Skene's midwifery class, animadverting upon the ignorance of midwives)				
1786	Dr. French and Dr. Livingston	...	...	...	Clinical Lectures at the Infirmary.
1790	Mr. James Russel	...	...	...	Clinical surgery at the Infirmary.
1802	Dr. Charles Skene	...	...	...	Anatomy
1811	Dr. William Dyce	...	...	...	Midwifery

¹ p. 58, ² p. 61, ³ p. 62, ⁴ p. 64 : "Records of Marischal College," Vol. II.

1818	George Barclay	...	...	...	...	Surgery
	William Henderson	...	...	...	...	Materia Medica
	(The proprietor of Caskieben, near Aberdeen)					
	Alexander Ewing	...	...	...	...	Physiology
	(This was the first year of the joint school)					
1819	Robert White	...	...	...	...	Institutes of Medicine
1820	Patrick Blaikie	...	...	...	...	Surgery
1823	Alexander Ewing	...	...	...	...	Anatomy
1826	Alexander Fraser	...	...	...	...	Midwifery
1827	William Knight	...	...	...	...	Botany
	(Dr. Knight had conducted a botany class at intervals for several years before this time. In 1780, Rev. Robert Memis had been granted £6 per annum by the Town Council towards the formation of a Botanic Garden, and, in 1787, had taught a class in botany. From 1792 to 1799, Rev. Alexander Smith had conducted a class, and, from 1801 to 1810, Professor James Beattie had conducted a class of ten to twenty students)					
1828	James Torrie	...	...	...	...	Institutes of Medicine
1830	Alexander Ewing	...	...	...	...	Surgery
	William Pirrie	...	...	...	...	Anatomy and Physiology
	William Laing	...	...	...	...	Clinical Medicine
1831	John Geddes	...	...	...	...	Institutes of Medicine
1834	William Laing	...	...	...	...	Surgery
1837	Alexander Murray	...	...	...	...	Clinical Medicine
	William Laing	...	...	...	...	Clinical Surgery
1839	William Henderson	...	...	...	...	Materia Medica
	Francis Ogston	...	...	...	...	Medical Jurisprudence
	Alexander Harvey	...	...	...	...	Institutes of Medicine
	William McKinnon	...	...	...	...	Comparative Anatomy
	James Jamieson	...	...	...	...	Midwifery
1840	John Shier...	...	...	...	...	Botany
1841	Robert Dyce	...	...	...	...	Midwifery
1845	Robert Jamieson	...	...	...	...	Mental Diseases
1849	George Ogilvie	...	...	...	...	Institutes of Medicine
	John Forbes Ogilvie	...	...	...	...	Insanity
1853	Wyville Thomson	...	...	...	...	Botany
1854	William Rhind	...	...	...	...	Botany
1855	Robert Beveridge	...	...	...	...	Botany

A severe blow had been dealt to medical studies connected with the Aberdeen Colleges by an occurrence known as "the burning of the burking-house," in 1831. Early in the 19th century, before the passing of the Anatomy Act (1830), the supply of bodies for dissection had been very difficult to obtain and had only been made possible by the enthusiastic though often ill-directed "Resurrectionist" activities of the Aberdeen medical students in the surrounding country churchyards, which vied with those recorded of Liston and other surgeons in Edinburgh. The terror inspired by the Burke and Hare affair of 1828 in Edinburgh had spread to Aberdeen, where Andrew Moir was lecturer on anatomy in 1831. The anatomist was apparently not too careful in his work, and one day a dog scraping in the open ground behind the anatomical theatre in St. Andrew Street revealed a dissected human limb to some women passing to the bleach-green. A crowd gradually collected, and it was found that the fragments of a dead body had been carelessly buried. The theatre appears to have had a sinister appearance, with three false windows to the front and receiving its lighting from behind. An excited and furious mob gradually collected, broke into the theatre and found three bodies laid out ready for dissection, which were borne off through the streets in triumph. The place was ransacked, instruments and furnishings destroyed and the mob, swelled to thousands, filled the neighbouring streets. Among them were jostled the protesting Provost of Aberdeen, members of the Town Council, policemen, and soldiers from the barracks, incapable of any action amid a mob of twenty thousand howling people. Andrew Moir, appearing on the spot, was pursued by a section of the crowd, thirsting for his life, but finally managed to conceal himself beneath a tombstone in the churchyard of St. Nicholas. Tar barrels and other combustible materials were brought and set on fire, the walls of the building were undermined, and in an hour literally not one stone was standing upon another of the blazing theatre. So ended this extraordinary example of mob law, which formed a serious setback to medical study in Aberdeen.¹

An important event in the Aberdeen Medical School towards the end of the 18th century was the foundation of the Aberdeen Medical Society. The prime mover in this was James McGrigor, who, with his companion, James Robertson, after completing his studies at Marischal College, had travelled to Edinburgh and spent a year at this University. In Edinburgh the Royal Medical Society, managed by students, had enjoyed over fifty years of flourishing existence, and on their return to Aberdeen, McGrigor and Robertson, together with ten other medical students from Marischal College, determined, in 1789, to found a debating society for mutual benefit, under the name of The Aberdeen Medical Society. The Society met once a week in the Greek Class-room for papers, criticism and discussions on the lines of the Edinburgh Students' Society. In 1790, twelve more names were added, and in 1791 several more joined. James McGrigor was first Secretary of the Society till 1790, and was evidently its moving spirit.

¹ E. H. B. Rodger: "Aberdeen Doctors," 1893, p. 240 *et seq.*

Among the first honorary members of the Society was Mr. Wynne, private chaplain to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV. His support was secured in a somewhat amusing manner. A dispute arose as to how the letter offering him honorary membership should be worded. It was thought improper that it should be too curt, and to terminate by wishing him the compliments of the season appeared to some members impertinent, so that these difficulties were finally overcome by the appointment of a committee to write the letter in Latin. James McGrigor, who happened to be leaving for London to try his fortunes, agreed to deliver the letter in person in order to save the postage. McGrigor's early energy was continued in later life, so that he became Director-General of the Army Medical Service in the Peninsula, and, as Sir James McGrigor, was one of Wellington's most trusted advisers.

Sir James McGrigor continued to take a close and practical interest in the affairs of the Society and later, when, in 1820, the Society built a Hall, he was largely instrumental in the successful issue of the project. This building, situated in King Street, and still the home of the Society, was the first work in beautifully-dressed white granite of Archibald Simpson (1790-1847), Aberdeen's most notable resident architect, who erected the Royal Infirmary and other principal buildings in the first half of last century, and gave a new character to Aberdeen as the "Granite City." As the student members of the Society graduated, those who lived in Aberdeen or its neighbourhood continued to attend its meetings, and the Society, before 1820, was divided into two classes—a senior class, consisting of medical practitioners, who met in the Hall, and a second or junior class consisting of medical students or apprentices, who had their own President and Secretary, and met in the Library. The junior class gradually languished, and eventually came to an end, but the senior class, under the title of the Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society, a name adopted about 1812, continued to flourish, and made itself one of the most important influences in the developing medical school of Aberdeen.¹

The Commissioners, appointed by the Act of 1858 to improve and regulate the course of studies in the Universities of Scotland, united in 1860 the two foundations of King's College and Marischal College, as the University of Aberdeen. Henceforth, the Faculty of Medicine in this University was lodged in Marischal College, which was more favourably placed than King's College for a medical school. For one thing, it was situated in the new town of Aberdeen, and was nearer to the Infirmary, which had been founded in 1739, and in which clinical teaching had gradually been established. In King's College there was only one professor, the mediciner, other subjects being represented by lecturers. The re-organisation of the Medical School approximated closely with the passing of the Medical Act of 1858. Regius Chairs in physiology, materia medica and midwifery were founded at the same time, while a Chair in pathology was added in 1882, and other Chairs and lectureships have gradually followed, as at other Universities.

¹ J. Scott Riddell: "Records of the Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society," Aberdeen, 1922, pp. 23-28.