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35. VI. Mass. Hist. Coll., iii, p. 399.
36. Chapin. *Loc. cit.*
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38. Conn. Coll. Records, iii, pp. 455 and 457; and Hoadley, Coll. Conn. Hist. Soc., Hartford, 1895, iii, p. 73.
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EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF A SCOTCH  
MEDICAL STUDENT OF THE EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY.

Edited by L. M. A. LIGGETT,  
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In 1785, Alexander Coventry, a young gentleman of eighteen, possessing good looks, a modest fortune, and a determined ambition, left his native town of Hamilton, in the beautiful Clyde valley of East Scotland, for a year at the Edinburgh Medical School, having spent two years in preparation under Dr. Hamilton at the Glasgow University. Like most young gentlemen of that period he kept a journal, and from it can be gathered a very faithful picture of a student's life and of the great group of men who were then making Edinburgh famous in surgery and medicine. Coventry writes under date of November 10:—"The rents from Fairhill" (his country place) "not being due until Spring, I borrowed thirty pounds from good Baillie Lamb, an Irish gentleman, and, my winter's expenses thus provided for, on the third of November I left Hamilton for Edinburgh, having to walk sixteen miles before I could catch the Glasgow coach. I reached Edinburgh about dark; I had written my uncle John Crie who lived at Inveresk and knew where to call for him, accordingly I met him and he took me in to Mr. Wallis's tavern in a lane running from High Street to the Cowgate. The first evening several of my

uncle's companions met; we had some whiskey punch and some excellent songs. One of the gentlemen was a presentor in a church. I had a small terrier which I had taught to sing or rather howl when others sang. I stated that she understood music and had her brought into the room while the gentlemen sang "The Banks of Invernay," and she made an accompaniment raising and falling her tones with accuracy. They were all amused and the singer wanted to purchase her but I refused."

The Edinburgh of which the young Scotchman found himself so suddenly a familiar part was a very different city from the Edinburgh of to-day. New Edinburgh with its magnificent streets was scarcely more than an ambitious plan. Princess Street had only recently been laid out and "The Garden and The Meadow" reclaimed from marshland; the real city of not more than thirty thousand citizens was the old town. High Street was the centre of the city and narrow lanes connected it with the Cowgate. The lofty ten-story tenements or "lands" were built and the castle crowned the summit of the ridge as at present but even then this little city, in the midst of a country half civilized and politically disturbed, enjoyed a reputation for learning and culture that was unique.

The old Infirmary where the medical lectures were held, was a long two-story stone building standing at the north end of the city, near Holyrood Palace; it had been in use for fifty years and was built under the supervision of Dr. Monro, founder of the Medical School. An old record states that "it was a marvel with what alacrity and hearty coöperation the good work was carried on. All classes contributed; land owners gave stone, merchants gave timber, farmers lent their carts, even the masons and other laborers gave one day's work out of the month *gratis*, as it was a building for the benefit of the poor," and to-day the old Infirmary stands a lasting memorial of the enthusiasm and skill of those early builders. The medical lectures are no longer given there but it is still, as its founders planned, in active service "as a building for the benefit of the poor and sick."

At the end of his year the student writes, "I remained about a month at Mrs. Wallis's, but I found it rather inconvenient as I wished to be more retired. I then hired a room in the Grassmarket, of an elderly woman who made my tea and prepared my dinner for so much a week, two shillings, I think. With this arrangement I could command my choice of food. My general plan was tea with bread and butter for breakfast. I would buy a

leg of mutton for three pence a pound, get this baked in the baker's oven for a penny, and it would last me two or three days for my dinner and supper. I would get a pint of porter for two and a half pence on condition of returning the bottles.

"The first day the mutton was hot, and with my porter and bread made a nice dinner for me.

"When I first went to Mrs. Wallis she had a smart, buxom maid, but not very handsome. She was soon to be married, and got me to write her love letters, and thought no harm to romp a little, but the landlady thought she spent too much time in my room dictating her letters, and turned her away.

"But to mend the matter got a beautiful Highland girl named Nancy McLeod. She was rather tall, a fine person, skin like the snow, dark eyes, hair inclined to red; aged about eighteen; her parents both dead, her father having been killed in the war in America, and her mother dying soon after.

"This was too much. Nancy had no letters to indite, but began to linger in my room, relate her history to me, and I believe Mrs. Wallis would have changed again had I not left the house.

"Nancy took my things to my new lodging, visited me on various pretexts, offered to go to America with me, as she had no friends in Scotland. I began to be too fond of Nancy. I made her a present of a new gown, gave her good advice, and, thank God, left her as innocent as I found her, although she fainted one night and lay on my bed until she recovered. Nancy was a sweet, innocent girl, but I fear was too beautiful for her own good. This was the only thing like a love affair that I had in Edinburgh. I was so fully engaged with Minerva that I had no time for the service of Venus. Indeed, Pallas was the tutelary Divinity of the since named Modern Athens; besides, my mind was filled with the Clydesdale Goddess; nor did I meet with but one in that proud seat of beauty to compare with the Niads of the Clyde and the Evan. One day, coming out of the public walk called The Meadow, I met a young lady leading a little girl. I saw in her face something so angelic that I could not resist the temptation to see it again. I looked after her. She was a little over middle size, moved with grace, and reminded me of Miss E. Nisbit.

"I returned to the walks, took a direction to meet her, touched my hat, she smiled, and, lest I might annoy her, I retired. I soon after met a city student, and on inquiring, he informed me that it

was Miss Burnet, Lord Monboddo's daughter, of whom Scotias Bard, in his 'Edina,' speaks so rapturously. But, alas! her aged father not long after was deprived of this inestimable blessing. She faded in the vigor of life, and left him childless in his old age, yet her name was consigned by the magic of poetry to last while the English language was spoken, beauty admired or poetry read.

"November third, the day after my arrival, I called on the Professors. Took Monro's ticket for Anatomy and Surgery, three guineas. Dr. Cullen's ticket for Theory and Practice of Physics, three guineas. A ticket for the Infirmary, three guineas. Upon Dr. Cross's recommendation, one for the clyrical lectures by Drs. Home and Gregory, three guineas, but worth all the others to one already initiated in these branches. I also paid some fees for privileges at the library and for janitor.

"Alexander Monro, Secundus, was a middle-aged, thick-set man, rather low in stature, and to me had a morose, vulgar look, nothing indicating genius. I think he was aged about fifty.

"I was struck with the venerable, fine, intelligent countenance of Dr. Cullen. He had a noble, gentlemanly appearance, a fine, bold Roman nose, a good forehead. His age and his large wig descending in ample curls, and his rather tall person, with fine figure, made him appear venerable.

"In taking out our tickets, we gave in our names and places of residence. When I gave my name and residence, Dr. Cullen inquired if I was son of Captain Coventry of Fairhill Park, and in my answering in the affirmative he said he knew my father well; that Hamilton was the place where he had begun to practice, and he kindly invited me to call frequently at his house, and even to attend his son, who occasionally lectured at home on medical subjects. Cullen was one of nature's nobles, uniting with genius, unbounded philanthropy, liberality, and all the virtues that can adorn a man. Dr. Cullen had the celebrated Dr. William Hunter as his first partner.

"Dr. Cullen knew all the families of respectability about Hamilton, and was gratified to hear of them. I called at times, but not so frequently as I ought, for Cullen had the liberality of a prince, and never was so happy as when entertaining his friends or befriending young men. In this manner he spent his large income, while Monro hoarded his to spoil his son, thus removing the necessity of exertion, and ruining the once celebrated medical school of Edinburgh. You scarcely now hear of Monro, who

certainly was a first-rate anatomist, but Cullen's fame, like that of Hippocrates, will never die. Some may ridicule his spasms, but remember that with Hoffman he rescued the practice from the trammels of Humeral pathology, referred diseases to their real source, in nine cases out of ten the nervous system. He replaced the horse before the cart, nor did he mistake the effect for the cause. Brown and others carried his system to absurd and dangerous lengths, but Cullen's curative system is still followed by the best practitioners, and when mercury, that giant, will not arrest a fever, the Cullenian plan is the safest to follow.

"Dr. Home is an amiable, not a great, man. He might be useful in giving medicines, as those of Stahl of Leyden, a fair trial, but I do not recollect one that got a permanent place in the pharmacopia. His *Spirit Terebinth* lately had a run, but is again sinking into disuse.

"The anatomical class that winter consisted of about five hundred pupils. Monro was certainly a first-class anatomist, and for that day an excellent physiologist. He claimed the discovery of the lymphatics, which Dr. Hunter disputed with him. He was not a pleasant lecturer. There was nothing shining or brilliant or eloquent. He always began his lectures with a 'Hem,' as if to clear his throat, and among the students he went by the name of old 'Grumpy.' His lectures were, however, useful, and remarkably well attended. The theatre was always full by the hour and he was punctual.

"Fyfe,\* called the 'Dissector,' prepared the subject and stood with the professor, with his dissecting dress on and scalpel in hand. We had four subjects in the course of the winter. In his last lecture Monro displayed his vast extent of knowledge which tended to prove the existence of a Supreme Being, and was a covert hit at some of his senior colleagues, who were somewhat suspected of materialism. Fyfe gave private lectures and demonstrations useful to the tyro in Anatomy. He was a little, sharp-looking man, excellent with the scalpel.

"Dr. Cullen was a pleasant lecturer, but age had laid his hard hand on him heavily. He articulated as if his teeth had gone. When in his prime he must have been great and interesting. Now he confined himself much to his first lines, and I think it is a

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\*Andrew Fyfe was Monro's "Dissector" for forty years. He was a thin man with a hesitating, flurried manner caused by incurable diffidence, and he was the butt of the students.—Ed.

great mistake for a teacher to ever print his first lines, or any part of his discourse. It deprives his hearers of the charm of the novelty and renders the student less attentive, at least so I thought it was with Cullen. We had almost all his opinions in his four volumes; of his first lines there was scarcely anything new to add. His class was not so fully attended as Monro's.

"Dr. Home's term of three months having expired, Gregory took the Clyrical Ward, and was a great favorite with the students. He stood about six feet, had a full, manly form, then in the prime of life, had a noble, open countenance, a fine toned voice, an easy delivery, possessed a consciousness of a full knowledge of his subject, had a finished, classical and belles-lettres education, was complete master of the dead languages, and was well acquainted with the modern ones. He was a scholar of Leyden, and had heard the anatomist Meckel of Berlin and Boerhaave of Leyden, lecture.

"Gregory was an open, off-hand man, who spoke out what he thought and was above all disguise. If he committed an error he was the first to point it out. Although he never ridiculed or spoke lightly of the opinions of colleagues or contemporaries, yet it was evident that he paid little attention to theories. His opinions were formed and his prescriptions were made at the patient's bedside. He formed his judgments from the existing circumstances, and not from any preconceived notions. About three hundred students attended his Clyrical Lectures.

"We all entered the cases selected for the Clyrical Ward in a book, went around with the Professor, saw him examine the patient, noted the pulse, the appearance of the tongue, the skin, and afterward examined for ourselves. Twice a week heard him lecture on the cases, describe the disease, class it, show in what the symptoms agreed or differed with the nosological facts; describe the method followed and give the reason for it, wherein the medicines had answered expectations or disappointed him. His prescriptions, as all prescriptions do, at times failed. In one case of pleurisy, which appeared to be doing well, two grains of opium were given twelve hours too soon, arrested the expectorations, and the patient suffocated. He acknowledged the error, and cautioned us against too early an administration of anodynes in this disease. His closing lecture on fevers was the greatest and most logical reasoning that I ever listened to. I can truly say that the Clyrical Ward was more useful to me than all my other

education gained in Edinburgh, but it took a Gregory to make it so.

“About the middle of the winter, February first, seeing a private course of Chemistry advertised, with a course of *Materia Medica*, by Drs. Duncan and Webster, I took a ticket, price one and a half guineas. The class met at seven thirty in the morning, an early hour for winter in Scotland; however, I attended punctually, and derived much benefit, having an opportunity of witnessing the chemical operations and of becoming acquainted with the *Materia Medica*. Webster’s syllabus was excellent, a great aid to the student, and was adopted by Murray and others. Dr. Webster took great pains in instructing us.

“My time was fully occupied. I took notes from all the lectures, generally the leading topics, which I filled up at my lodging, which kept me from bed till two in the morning. Then Webster at seven, Cullen at nine, Infirmary at twelve, Munro at one, and twice a week Clyrical Lecture at three, besides our notes and visits at the Clyrical Ward.

“All the leisure time I had was on Sunday, when I took the fresh air on Calton Hill, walked in The Meadows, or rambled over the King’s Park, walked to Leith to see the Firth and the ocean, a new sight to me.

“Several times I went to Musselburgh, or rather Inveresk, to see my uncle John Crie, who always received me kindly, rather too much so, as we always had wine at our dinners.

“We had vacation from Christmas to January third, and I went to Hamilton. I undertook to take the coach from Hallytown, but was too late, and walked all the way. Thrice I saw the coach start when in sight. I walked the thirty miles by two P. M., and unwilling to enter Hamilton before dark, called on William Clellum, who had been shop mate at the doctors in Glasgow. His father was a farmer between the Shott and Clyde.

“On passing the New Bridge over the river, I saw the Duke and a number of others, playing at the curling stones on the Clyde, now frozen over. This is a game peculiar to Scotland, played on the ice, openly, by one parish against another parish. It seems a manly and innocent recreation, requiring strength of arm and accuracy of eye.

“After spending the holidays in Hamilton, I returned by coach to Edinburgh, to begin my studies the third of January, and the remainder of the winter was passed in the same manner as the first part. I became, however, thin and emaciated. It was too

close confinement. I was harassed with heart burn. Even the Porter and Mutton did not sustain me. One day I met Dr. Brown, Jr., from Hamilton, in the street. He stared at me and said I was destroying my constitution. He attributed my decline to a wrong cause, to dissipation, but in no period of my life had I been more temperate than while at Edinburgh. I had not been in a Porter House or a theatre during the winter. It was hard study and close confinement; and my late hours revising my notes taken at the lectures, wore on my constitution, and I longed for the approach of May and the end of the lectures.

"A few days previous to my leaving Edinburgh I called on Dr. Cullen. He kindly inquired my design for the future, and learning that my intention was to visit America proffered a letter of introduction to Dr. Bard of New York, at the same time observing that the late war had lessened his influence in that quarter, but if I would go to the British possessions in the East or West Indies he could be of some service to me.

"Dr. Cullen appointed the following Sunday afternoon for me to call, take tea with the family and receive my letter.

"The lectures closed on Friday, and I received my certificate of graduation from Mr. Robinson, which is as follows:

Alexandrum Coventrie.  
Cytificate of Graduation.  
Given by Jacobus Robertson,  
1785, 3 Calendai Maie.

"I made arrangements to leave the next Monday morning, the ninth of May.

"While taking a walk towards Salisbury Craigs I overtook Dr. Webster, who inquired into my prospects, invited me to drink tea with him next Sunday, and was very kind and attentive. He said he had no acquaintances in North America, but could be of use to me, and would be glad to be, in either of the Indies. He offered to introduce me to Sir Stuart Kreland, and procure me a passage in his carriage to Glasgow if I staid until Wednesday, but I had arranged for an earlier start. This was the most disinterested and kind attention that I ever met with, and I was fully sensible of the doctor's goodness.

"On Saturday, May seventh, I walked out to Mussleburgh, six miles, or rather, on to Inveresk. It was a beautiful day, and the walk extremely pleasant. The road is level, the country gradually ascending, highly cultivated to the right, and the sea, or the



Firth of Forth, eight miles wide, and a lovely beach to the left. You pass through Preston, a village where much salt is made, and where in the Rebellion of 1745 the Highland claymore prevailed over the British bayonets. It was two P. M. when I reached Mussleburgh, and between that and Inveresk I met my uncle, who said he had some business to transact in the town which would not detain him, and dinner would be ready on our return. We stopped at a tavern, and there my uncle met Mr. Dalloway, from the green isle, an old acquaintance, a painter; past times and old scenes were talked over; we had whiskey punch, cheese and cake were brought out, punch was succeeded by porter, and the latter retired by oporto, dinner was forgotten, or supplied by the oat cake and cheese, the usual accompaniment of sociability in a Scotch tavern. I ate a light breakfast and had taken a long walk, and the mixture of liquors began to effect my stomach and head, they being little used to such diet. I had sense enough to see that a short time would put me *hors de combat*, and I would be drunk at a tavern. I sought the back door. In a high wall opposite I observed a white stone; could I walk across the lane and put my hand on it I concluded, by keeping it close aboard, it would bring up short any lee lurch I might make to the starboard and thus giving me some chance of reaching port without capsizing, for the wall continued to Inveresk and within a few yards of my uncle's. The experiment succeeded, my hand touched the stone, and I started within two feet of the wall. This was my last consciousness until on Sunday morning I found myself in bed with my clothes on, having simply removed my boots. I had found the bed where I usually slept at my uncle's and had lain down upon it. The period from my starting from the white stone in the wall to my awaking in the morning is a perfect blank in my existence, of which I have not or ever had any consciousness, yet my uncle's man informed me that I had reached the room and went to bed without assistance. It was like the delirium of fever, it made no impression, it left no trace behind. According to this, my experience, is not the savage's reasoning more just than that of civilized man? An Indian does not resent an injury done when the aggressor is intoxicated. The Indian says, 'Rum did it.' It may be safe to consider it as an aggravation because it might be simulated, yet the malice prepense is no more founded than in the maniac. From the time I started from the white stone to the next morning I might have committed a dozen murders and yet been unconscious of hurting a fly. Although

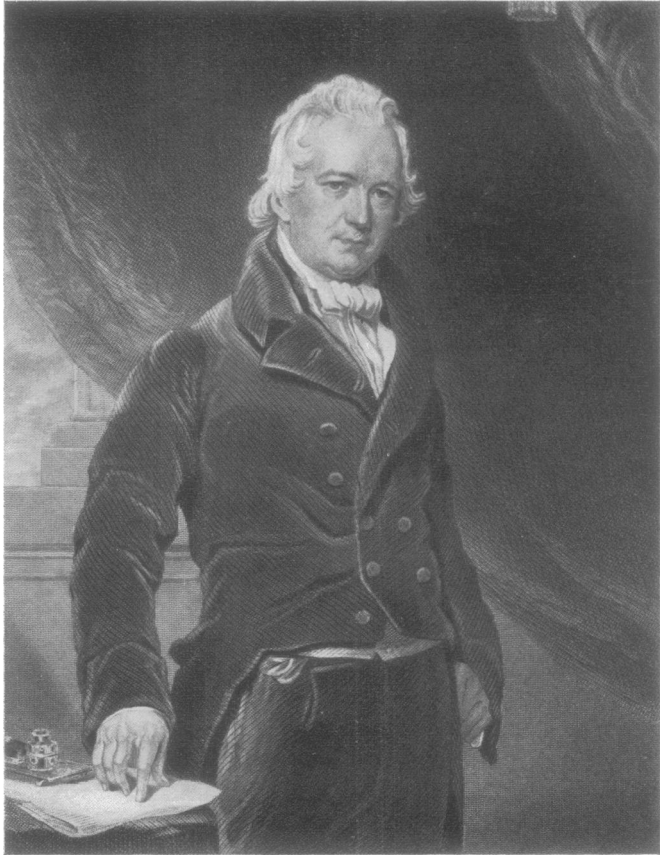
the period alluded to seems a blank in my existence, the suffering of the next morning is too deeply impressed ever to be erased from the tablet of memory. The day had dawned when I awoke, a death-like sickness oppressed my stomach, my tongue was parched and furred. I went to the pump and drank one tumbler of water after another and threw them up, but neither nausea nor thirst was removed. At last breakfast was announced, my uncle was at table, fresh and lively, bearing no signs of yesterday's conviviality, notwithstanding he continued at the table drinking several hours after I left him. He smiled at my woe begone appearance. One cup of coffee served me for my breakfast. I inquired how his stomach could bear such an incongruous mixture. He said by recalling, mentally, a mouthful of bad fish he had swallowed many years before, he could at any time evacuate the contents of his stomach, by which means he kept it clear and never experienced any bad effects from mixing liquors. I could bear unmixed beverages tolerably well, and with my uncle's aid had punished two bottles of port in an evening without ill effect, but this experience taught me I could not stand a mixture. After breakfast I parted with my maternal Uncle John Crie for the last time, never seeing him again.

"On Sunday morning I started on foot for Edinburgh. Several times I drank salt water and vomited so as to restore my head to its natural state. As I approached the city I met numbers of people, apparently mechanics, coming and going, all well dressed in their Sunday clothes, for the Scottish mechanic will cover the back if he pinches the belly. This seems a peculiar trait in the Scot. Even George the Fourth when in Edinburgh inquired for the *canaille*. He saw none but well dressed people, neither rags or dirt.

"Having appointed that afternoon to call on Prof. Cullen I was afraid he would perceive that I had been drinking, and impute it to debauchery, so to obviate this as far as possible, I went to a barber, had my beard shaved off and my hair dressed; put on a clean shirt and my best coat.

"The good old man received me courteously, I drank tea with him, received an introductory and commendatory letter to Dr. Samuel Bard of New York.

"The writing occupied half the sheet and was friendly, recommending me to his advice and protection."



*W<sup>th</sup> most sincerely  
John Abernethy,*