

THE EARLY MEDICAL SCHOOL OF ST. ANDREWS

THE University of St. Andrews was the first of the Scottish seats of learning to be instituted. From its beginning in the year 1411, when it was founded by Henry Wardlaw, Bishop of St. Andrews, the institution was a "*studium generale*," or "*universitas studii*," and as such it was entitled to include all the faculties in theology, canon and civil law, arts and medicine. The foundation of Universities in Scotland was somewhat late as compared with those in other countries, despite the fact that many Scotsmen sought learning at foreign Universities. The War of Independence with England was largely responsible for this, although a pious Scottish lady, Dervorguilla, Countess of Galloway, and widow of John de Baliol, had founded a College at Oxford in 1269, probably moved to this step in large part by the desire to encourage young Scotsmen to travel and familiarise themselves with the manners of the wealthier southern country.

St. Andrews from early times had been a resort of pilgrims, because of the relics supposed to have been brought by St. Regulus to that town, and for the reception and succour of these pilgrims, there was a hospital associated with the Church of St. Leonard.¹ This hospital, along with the associated Church, was incorporated in the College of St. Leonard in 1512. At this time Archbishop Alexander Stewart, in his charter, mentioned that "miracles and pilgrimages . . . had in a measure ceased, so that the hospital was without pilgrims, and the Priors did set therein certain women, chosen by reason of old age, who did give little or no return in devotion or virtue." In a deed of 1529, a reference is made to Mr. George Martine as Preceptor, Master and Possessor of the Hospital and Leper-house beside the city of St. Andrews, founded for the honour and worship of St. Nicholas.² Little else, however, appears to be available in the way of information regarding early medical activities at St. Andrews.

The foundation of the University was sanctioned in 1413 by a Papal Bull from Pope Benedict XIII., and, in the succeeding century, the University showed considerable development till it came to include three separate Colleges. These were as follows:—

(1) St. Salvator's College, was founded in 1450 by James Kennedy, Bishop of St. Andrews.

(2) St. Leonard's College, was founded in 1512 by Alexander Stewart, Archbishop of St. Andrews, and John Hepburn, Prior of the Metropolitan Church.

¹ Herkless: "*Votiva Tabella*," Maclehose, Glasgow, 1911, p. 31.

² Buist: "*Votiva Tabella*," p. 197.

It received in the same year the Royal confirmation of James IV., and was intended for twenty-six students.

(3) St. Mary's College, was founded in 1537 by Archbishop James Beaton, on the site of the "Pedagogium," the original academical building. It was further endowed by Archbishop John Hamilton in 1553, and reconstituted by him under a Papal Bull, being intended for twenty-four students.

In 1579, soon after the Reformation, the constitution of the University was changed. The College of St. Mary was now reserved for theology, while the Colleges of St. Salvator and St. Leonard were restricted to the teaching of philosophy, law and medicine. The Act of 1579 was partially repealed in 1621, but, in 1747, the two Colleges of St. Salvator and St. Leonard were finally joined by Act of Parliament, and have since been known as the United College of St. Salvator and St. Leonard. University College, Dundee, was founded and endowed, in 1880, by Miss Baxter, of Balgavies, and Dr. John Boyd Baxter, and was opened in 1883.¹

There seems already to have been some teaching in medicine, for when John Major came to be Principal of St. Salvator's College, he brought with him William Manderston, who had been a student of Montaigu College in Paris and was a doctor of medicine. William Manderston, according to the fashion of the times, in his "*Bipartitum in Morali Philosophia*," published in 1523, includes a commendation received from "*Robertus Gra. medicinae amator*," who refers to William Manderston as "*praeceptorum suo apollonie artis professori peritissimo*." Robert Gray had apparently been a pupil of Manderston in Paris, and as there are not likely to have been two *amatores medicinae* named Robert Gray at the time, this is probably the same Robert Gray who was appointed mediciner at King's College, Aberdeen, in 1522. Gray, at all events, refers to Manderston as a leader in medicine (without which the State would be altogether poor), and speaks of him as being recalled by Archbishop James Beaton to his native soil as desired for his high reputation (*spectatum et desideratum*).²

In the re-organisation of Scottish education which followed the Reformation, under the personal direction of John Knox, a definite scheme took form, that, of the three Scottish Universities, St. Andrews should be the school where medicine was to be taught. The plan is laid down in the Buke of Discipline of 1560, where it is said:—

" . . . nixt we think it necessarie thair be three Universities in this whole Realme, establischeit in the Tounis accustumed. The first in Sanctandrois, the second in Glasgow, and the thrid in Abirdene.

And in the first Universitie and principall, whiche is Sanctandrois, thair be three Colledgeis. And in the first Colledge, quhilk is the entre of the Universitie, thair be four classes or saigeis [*chairs*]: the first, to the new Suppostis, shalbe onlie Dialectique; the nixt, onlie Mathematique; the thrid of Phisick onlie; the fourt of Medicine.

¹ "St. Andrews University Calendar, 1926-1927," pp. 26 and 27.

² Manderston: "*Bipartitum in Morali Philosophia Opusculum*," 2nd Edn., Paris 1523.

"In the fourth class, shall be ane Reidar of Medicine, who shall compleit his course in five years: after the study of the whiche tyme, being by examinatioun fund sufficient, thei shall be graduat in Medicine. . . .

"*Item*, That nane be admittit to the classe of the Medicine bot he that shall have his testimoniall of his tyme weall spent in Dialecticque, Mathematique, and Phisicque and of his docilitie in the last."¹

As to the salary of the teacher, the provision was made "for the Stipend of everie Reader in Medicine and Lawis, ane hundredth threttie three pundis, vi. s. viii. d."²

At the same time, it was intended that Glasgow University should teach Arts only, and Aberdeen Laws and Divinity. Nevertheless, the scheme never came into operation, and Gilbert Skeen continued as mediciner at King's College, Aberdeen, for fifteen years, when he betook himself to practice in Edinburgh. Twenty-two years later the Town Council of Edinburgh also disregarded the general plan of the Reformers for Scottish education by establishing their Town's College.

The failure of Knox's plan for a medical school at St. Andrews is readily understood when one reflects that a living study like that of medicine can hardly flourish save in a centre of population, and can certainly never bear fruit in the output of practitioners skilled in the knowledge of human beings, and capable



JOHN KNOX (1505-1572)

(From the contemporary engraving by Beza)

¹ "Works of John Knox," edited by David Laing, Edinburgh, 1848, Vol. II, pp. 213-215.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 218.

of treating their disorders, unless associated with other forms of intellectual and social endeavour. St. Andrews had never been a great centre of commerce, and after the Reformation it ceased to be even a centre of religious activity and resort of pilgrims.

In the report of the Commission appointed by King James VI. to visit the University in 1579, it was provided that the Principal of St. Salvator's should be professor in medicine, and should read this subject four times in the week. Another report, in 1588, mentions that "The Provost, sin the reformatioun, affirmis he teichis tuyis [*twice*] ilk oulk [*week*], the Aphorismes Hippocrates, quhill [*until*] October last; sensyne [*since then*] he hes teichit na thing; the Maisteris says he nevir teichis, skantlie anis [*hardly once*] in the moneth."¹

The teaching of law at St. Andrews laboured under much the same difficulties as that of medicine, for the Provost reported of the reader in law, Mr. William Walwood, that "he neglectis oft," and on one occasion, the Provost came to his school "and commandit him to come doun, for he wald teich himself at that hour; quhairupoun great slander followit," and at a later date it was found "that the Professioun of the Lawes is na wayes necessar at this tyme in this Universitie."²

A Commission of 1642, after prescribing certain books which should be studied at St. Andrews, added to the list, "if so much tyme may be spared, some compend of Anatomy." In 1649, there was a provision that one of the Masters of St. Salvator's College should teach medicine twice a week. In all these regulations for teaching medicine, however, this subject was simply a part of the Arts curriculum, taught to students as a valuable part of general knowledge. Nevertheless, the University still held to the privilege conferred by its Bull of foundation in granting degrees in medicine. These were sometimes given *honoris causa*, frequently *in eundem gradum*, and sometimes, unfortunately, *in absentia*, in return for a payment. The most frequent condition was that of giving the degree *in eundem gradum*, which meant that an applicant already a graduate of some foreign University, desired to add to his qualifications the degree of M.D. from a Scottish University, and this was granted on production of the foreign diploma, which thus offered a certain amount of protection to the University. It appears, from the report of a Committee in 1747, that the fee for a degree was £10 sterling, of which the professor of medicine received £3.³

In the 18th century the University appears to have obtained an opportunity of gratifying its long-cherished wish to have a professorship of medicine. Prior to 1722, the Duke of Chandos, through his son's tutor, Dr. Charles Stuart, offered the University £1000, with the suggestion that it should be employed for the

¹ Buist: "Votiva Tabella," p. 201.

² Buist: "Votiva Tabella," p. 202.

³ Buist: "Votiva Tabella," p. 216.

establishment of a Chair of Eloquence. The University, however, decided that it should be used for the foundation of a Chair of Medicine and Anatomy. A letter from Dr. Stuart, dated 28th November, 1720, gives an amusing criticism upon what he regards as a useless proposal:—

“ . . . ye Theory and Practise of Medicine are not only considered as distinct Professions in some of ye Universitys abroad, but there are likewise other Sciences such as Anatomy, Chimistry and Botany, which are unseparable retainers to that Science and absolutely necessary to ye study of it: now there are no foundations in your University for any of these Sciences, nor perhaps will be for these hundred years to come, and as one man can hardly be sufficient for more than one or at most two of them, I can not see of what great use a Professor of Medicine wou'd be at St. Andrews, where an Anatomist may be ten years in looking for a body to dissect; I think I plainly forsee that this Profession wou'd quickly fall into ye hands of some young Physitian who, wanting imployment, should have interest enough to get himself chosen to it, for a livelihood to him, without having so much as one scholar to teach. . . .”¹

Nevertheless, the University persisted in its intention, and Thomas Simson (1696–1764) was appointed first Chandos Professor of Medicine in 1722. He had graduated M.D. at Glasgow in 1720, and on his introduction to the Chair at St. Andrews, delivered an oration: “De Erroribus tam veterum quam recentiorum circa Materiam Medicam.” He also published a treatise, “De Re Medica,” in 1726, concerning the need of investigating the laws under which the human machine acted, and of studying the natural history of disease by experiment, and a treatise on “A System of the Womb,” at Edinburgh, in 1729. He lectured in English instead of the Latin, which was then commonly employed, and he appears to have thrown himself into the duties of his post with considerable ardour. He was succeeded by his son, James Simson, who had graduated M.D. at St. Andrews in 1760, with a dissertation, “De Asthmate Infantium Spasmodico,” which is to be found in the “Miscellanies” of Andrew Duncan. He in turn was succeeded by James Flint in 1770, but there is no evidence that either James Simson or James Flint delivered any lectures.

After the death of James Flint, Robert Briggs was appointed to the Chair in 1811, and the University before his appointment saw fit to enact that the Chandos Professor should be a teaching professor, and should open classes to be regularly taught during the session of the United College for the instruction of



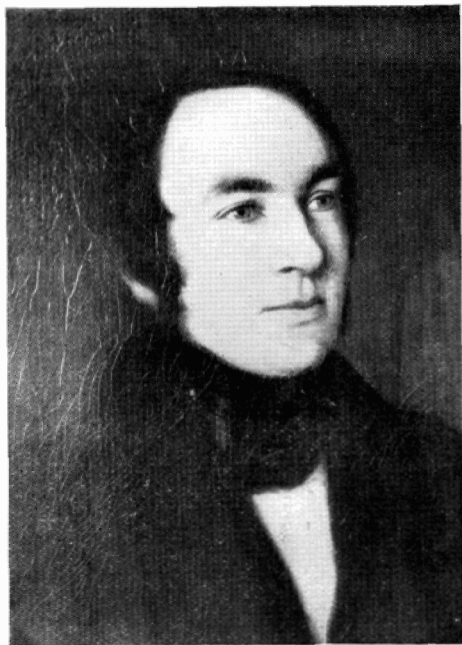
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¹ Buist: “Votiva Tabella,” p. 209.

any students, who might apply to him, in the principles of medicine, anatomy and chemistry. This is the first mention of chemistry in connection with the Chair, and the University further provided apparatus for practical work, which was successful, and was continued till the death of Professor Briggs in 1840.

In 1808, Dr. John Gray, of London, had left a sum of money to found a special professorship of chemistry. The funds were allowed to accumulate until

1840,¹ when the Chair of Chemistry was inaugurated, and Arthur Connell was appointed professor. He held the Chair till 1862, when he was succeeded by Matthew Forster Heddle.



JOHN REID, M.D. (1809-1849)
(Original in the University of St. Andrews)

After the death of Professor Briggs, the Chandos Chair again became one of medicine only, and John Reid (1809-1849), a man of much finer qualities than his predecessors, was elected professor in 1841. Reid was a native of Bathgate, and had studied medicine at Edinburgh University, where he graduated M.D. in 1830. After a period of study in Paris, he returned to Edinburgh in 1832, and was one of a committee of investigation who went to Dumfries to enquire into an outbreak of cholera. He had been a demonstrator of anatomy at Surgeons' Hall, had joined the College of Surgeons as Fellow in 1836, and in the same year had become lecturer there on physiology. He was also greatly interested in pathology, and,

between 1838 and 1841, acted as pathologist to the Royal Infirmary at Edinburgh. Immediately on his appointment as Chandos Professor, he began a course on comparative anatomy and physiology at St. Andrews, which proved attractive to students and successful. In 1848 he published a well-known collection of papers entitled "Physiological, Anatomical and Pathological Researches," a volume remarkable for originality and accuracy of observation. One of the papers contained in it was "An Investigation of the Epidemic Fever of Edinburgh in the Years 1836, 1837 and 1838." It is a remarkable fact, as illustrative of the changes which have taken place in the incidence of certain

¹ Anderson : " The Matriculation Roll of the University of St. Andrews, 1747-1897," Edinburgh, 1905, p. xxx.

diseases, that 2037 patients were treated during fifteen months for this fever in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, with a mortality of over 13 per cent. Reid clearly described in this disease the pathological changes characteristic of typhoid fever. He was thus one of the first to differentiate between typhoid and typhus fevers. The University of St. Andrews suffered a great loss when Reid died from cancer of the tongue in 1849.

After the death of Reid, George Edward Day (1815-1872) was appointed Chandos Professor. He had already made a reputation by translating Simon's "Animal Chemistry," for the Sydenham Society, and later he translated for the same series the fourth volume of Rokitansky's "Pathological Anatomy." Immediately after his appointment he published "A Practical Treatise on the Domestic Management and Most Important Diseases of Advanced Life," and, in 1860, a work on "Chemistry in its Relation to Physiology and Medicine." He worthily continued the reputation which Reid had gained for this Chair, both in teaching and in publication. He resigned the Chair in 1863, when Oswald Home Bell was appointed, to be succeeded in 1875 by J. Bell Pettigrew. Under Bell and his successors, the Chandos Chair became a professorship of physiology.

The desire of the University to establish a Faculty of Medicine was again evinced in a somewhat curious way in connection with the Chair of Civil History. A professorship of Civil History had existed from 1747, and an experiment had been made in 1825 by the appointment of Mr. J. G. Macvicar as lecturer on natural history, which had proved that the latter subject was one in which a successful course could be held. In 1850, when Dr. William Macdonald was appointed professor of Civil History, it was made a condition of his appointment that he should be able and willing to teach natural history, although this was a totally different subject. The Chair was thereafter continued as a professorship of natural history, and Macdonald was succeeded in 1875 by Professor Henry A. Nicholson.

It was not till the establishment of University College in the neighbouring city of Dundee, in the year 1880, that the design which St. Andrews University had entertained for several centuries, of establishing a full medical school, succeeded in taking definite shape. This College was opened in 1883, with Chairs of Chemistry and Biology in addition to other subjects. The incorporation of University College with the University of St. Andrews was accomplished in 1897, and by this time Chairs of Physics, Botany, Anatomy, Physiology and a lectureship on surgery had been set up. Finally, in 1898, the University Medical School was inaugurated, on the basis of teaching the preliminary subjects both in Dundee and St. Andrews, and conducting the subjects of the final three years, which are chiefly of a technical and clinical nature, in the city of Dundee.