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York Herald, 15 September 1855, report (A, 83, n 63)

MONTHLY MEETING OF THE YORK CITY COUNCIL.

On Monday last, the monthly meeting of the Council was held at the Guildhall, when there were present the Lord Mayor; Aldermen Meek, Rowntree, Richardson, Evers, and Meek, jun.; the Sheriff; and Councillors Douglas, Parkinson, Scott, E. Calvert, Hunt, Watkinson, Charlton, Hands, Shilleto, Smith, E. R. Anderson, Clark, Wilkinson, Scholefield, Bell, Collier, G. Steward, Smithson, Allen, and Craven.

THE VACANT MEDICAL CHAIR AT EDINBRO'.

Twenty printed pamphlets containing testimonials were produced, and a note was read by the TOWN CLERK from Dr. Laycoc[k], of York, who is a candidate for the vacant medical chair at Edinbro', which is in the gift of the town-council of that city, and who wished for a testimonial of the public services he had rendered to this city.

Mr. Ald. MEEK said he was not aware of the circumstance of Dr. Laycock being a candidate for the chair of medicine in the University of Edinbro' until he came into the Council-Chamber that morning, and when he was asked to make a proposition on the subject, he had not the least objection in doing so; he alluded to an expression of opinion by the Cou[n]cil in favour of Dr. Laycock's application for the situation. He had known that gentleman for a great number of years, and had been pretty well acquainted with him; and looking at the professional testimonials which had been given on his behalf in connection with his high moral character, he thought these justly entitled Dr. Laycock to an expression of approval by this Council. With regard to his character as a citizen, he never heard anything to his discredit. His anxiety to benefit his fellow-citizens, by improving the san[i]t[ary] state and condition of the city, especially in the neighbourhood of the Foss, had given great satisfaction, and as a professional man he had discharged his duties in a manner satisfactory to the public. For these reasons, and from the position he held in this city, he thought the council might, with confidence, recommend Dr. Laycock to the honourable situation he was seeing to occupy in Edinbro'. He (Mr. Ald. Meek) had not had time to look over the large number of testimonials which had been given in favour of Dr. Laycock, but it is clear from them, given as they were by so many eminent men, that he had attained a position among the faculty which his coadjutors very highly appreciated; and although he might regret there was a possibility of losing him, yet it was the duty of the city—as it was the duty of every other city or town where a member of the community distinguished himself either by his commercial or professional pursuits, so as to raise himself in the scale of society—to give him their sanction and confidence. Dr. Laycock had raised himself, in his profession, to a position which had called forth the approval of many professional men of the highest order, and it was only due that this Council should

present to him their approval, believing that Dr. Laycock was not seeking to fill a situation that he was not well qualified to sustain. With these views he moved, "It having been reported to this Council that Dr. Laycock is a candidate for the important appointment of professor of physic in the University of Edinbro', resolved that this Council desires to bear its testimony to the zeal and ability by which Dr. Laycock has raised himself to the distinguished position he now holds in the medical world. That for a period of nearly twenty years the career of Dr. Laycock has been known and highly appreciated by the members of this Council, who particularly recognise his indefatigable and successful efforts to improve the sanit[a]ry condition of the labouring classes. That whilst this Council deems Dr. Laycock highly qualified to fill the chair of the practice of physic in the University of Edinbro', it believes that his talents and experience as a physician will prove a great acquisition to that city. That the Town Clerk do send a copy of these resolutions to Dr. Laycock."

Mr. Ald. EVERS, in seconding the proposition, reiterated the sentiments to which Mr. Ald. Meek had given utterance, which he believed were the sentiments generally entertained by the inhabitants of York.

Mr. Ald. MEEK observed that it has been suggested to him by the Town Clerk, that the Council of Edinboro' had the appointment vested in them, and therefore it appeared quite in character that one Council should address another.

Mr. Ald. ROWNTREE said that when he entered this room he had no knowledge whatever of its being the intention of any gentleman to move a vote of this kind, and the first thought in his own mind was the undesirableness and somewhat of danger—(Mr. Ald. Meek, jun.—Hear, hear)—of employing the city seal for the furtherance of private advantage. He thought it was of very great importance that the power possessed by the Council should be wisely exerted, and it should be seen that they met for public and not for private advantage. (Hear, hear.) He, however, wished to say that he thought, on public grounds, Dr. Laycock had a right to that which he asked from the Council. In looking back on the efforts of Dr. Laycock to benefit the sanitary condition of York, the laborious efforts he made years ago to ascertain the vital statistics of York, the amount of labour, and cost, and pains he took on that occasion, and the extreme value of the report he presented on the sanitary condition of York—which report contained the evidence they fell back upon for the improvement of the drainage and other matters in York—he thought these matters constituted a sufficient and adequate ground for their vote on this occasion, and he felt pleasure that there was an opportunity afforded of testifying, to their fellow-citizens and to the public at large, the sense they entertained of the value that kind of service which Dr. Laycock had rendered to the citizens of York. (Applause.) His qualities of mind as a writer and a lecturer would rather peculiarly qualify him to fill advantageously the position he sought to occupy, and therefore on the ground of what he had done for the city, and on the ground of his fitness and qualification for the post to which he aspired, he heartily supported the resolution. (Applause.)

Mr. Ald. RICHARDSON also supported the resolution, on similar grounds, stating that he thought the city had been very much indebted to Dr. Laycock on many occasions.

A previous speaker said it seemed to him that the Council had nothing to do with giving characters to physicians {Annotation: "or to"} anybody else. They were gravely asked to adopt a long resolution drawn up by somebody with very great care, and which contained

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matters on which he did not think himself compete[n]t to decide without notice. {Annotation: "He objected to the resolution on the point of order."} They had a bye-law which stated that they should not introduce any question without notice, and no notice had been given in this instance. The question, therefore, could not be entertained.

Some conversation ensued, the LORD MAYOR remarking there was such a bye-law as had been stated. The appointment would be made on the 2nd of October, and if the present objection was pressed, it would render necessary the holding of a special meeting which might not be convenient to the Council.

The SHERIFF did not oppose the passing of a resolution expressive of their obligation to Dr. Laycock and of his high respectab[ilit]y, but he objected to the wording of the resolution which had been proposed.

Mr. Ald. MEEK Jun., thought they should be careful how they stepped out of their province, and that if this motion were passed, it would be opening a door to a great amount of business in the future. He entertained a high opinion of Dr. Laycock, and had already signed a testimonial in his favour; and if the resolution were confined to a recognition of the services Dr. Laycock had rendered to the city and the Council, he considered they would not be going too far.

Mr. Ald. MEEK proposed to alter the resolution as follows:- "That this Council desires to bear its testimony to the great zeal and ability by which Dr. Laycock, has raised himself to the distinguished position he now holds, and particularly recognises his indefatigable and successful efforts to improve the san[i]t[a]ry condition of the labouring classes."

Mr. Ald. ROWNTREE particularly drew attention to a testimonial to Dr. Laycock from Professor Phillips.

Mr. CLARK suggested that the form of the resolution should be as follows:- "That this Council desires to bear its testimony to the great zeal and ability of Dr. Laycock, and particularly recognises his indefatigable and successful efforts to improve the san[i]t[a]ry condition of the labouring classes."

The objection already taken, however, was persevered in on the question of order, whereupon

The LORD MAYOR said there was no further business.

The meeting then separated.

Daily Scotsman, 3 October 1855, report (A, 97, n 92)

TOWN COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS.

A meeting of Council was held yesterday—the Lord Provost presiding.

THE VACANT MEDICAL CHAIR.

The first business was the election of a Professor of the Practice of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh. The Town Clerk read the following list of candidates for the chair—viz., Professor Bennett, Dr Craigie, Dr Halliday Douglas, Dr W. T. Gairdner; Dr Laycock, of York; Dr M'Cormac, of Belfast; Dr Munro, late of India; and Dr A. Wood.

Dean of Guild FRASER, in withdrawing two of these candidates, said—I have been requested to withdraw from this important and honourable competition the name of one of

the candidates—Dr Gairdner, to whom I had from the first given my most earnest and conscientious support, and that wholly and solely from the conviction arrived at by an amount of testimony most thoroughly satisfactory in every point of view. Indeed, I believe that but with one disqualifying exception, his fitness for the office was accepted on all hands, by the Patrons and the Professors alike; that disqualification was his age. It is not necessary in discharging my present duty to inquire whether this objection was a valid one or not; but if his youth, or rather, his not being an older man than he is, be an objection, I would justify my preference by pointing to the fact several of our most distinguished Professors were appointed to chairs at an earlier period of life than that of Dr Gairdner. In conclusion, I will venture to predict, what it requires very little prevision to foretell, that although retiring from this competition, Dr Gairdner has before him a bright career of professional eminence, honourable to himself, useful to his fellow-countrymen, and such as will maintain and extend the fame and glory of his own time-honoured Alma Mater. (Applause.) In these days of warlike excitement, most of us have been made aware that an honourable retreat is the next best thing to a victory; and as a sort of leader in this honourable contest—though not an entirely satisfactory mode of placing my men—I have also been requested to withdraw the name of Dr M’Cormac—a gentleman in all respects well entitled to be a competitor on the present occasion, from his great professional eminence, his reputation as a philosophical enquirer, and from his labours as an enlightened philanthropist.

Dr Craigie and Dr Halliday Douglas also withdrew their names from the list of candidates.

The LORD PROVOST then said—I know that I express your sentiments when I say that we all feel deeply the importance of the duty which we are now called to discharge. We have waited anxiously till we should have an opportunity of weighing the claims of the various candidates, and judging of these by the evidence adduced. Of this, I am certain from my own observation, that none of us has formed a conclusion prematurely, and that the judgement arrived at has not been formed without the most deliberate consideration, and an earnest desire to arrive at a satisfactory result, and that upon exclusively public grounds. On the present occasion, the difficulty of forming an opinion is increased by the fact, that all the candidates now before us are men of great ability and acquirements, any one of whom could perform honourably and creditably the duties of the vacant chair. In forming my own opinion, I have been somewhat influenced by the course followed on previous occasions by our predecessors in office. For more than a century, the almost invariable practice has been to promote the Professor of the Institutes to the Chair of the Practice of Physic, and the reason of such a course is obvious. A knowledge of the theory is indispensable to the practice, and the one is a necessary preparative to the other. (Hear, hear.) Whoever cultivates successfully the theory, will most efficiently carry into practice that knowledge without which practice becomes empirical. Accordingly, that great and good man whose loss to the University we all deeply deplore, at the time when this chair was last vacant taught the Institutes; and because he did so successfully, he was transferred to the Chair of the Practice of Physic. This was not a solitary instance, but, on the contrary, it formed a sequel to several—men whose names occupy a conspicuous place in the history of our College. I have requested the Clerk to make up a note of the appointments made to the chair during the last century, and the first to which I beg to call your attention

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is that of Dr John Gregory, who does not appear to have previously held a chair, but who was appointed, on the 12th February 1766, to the Chair of Practice of Medicine. The next was Dr Cullen, who was appointed to that chair on 17th February 1773, and who occupied the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine, from which he was transferred. The next Professor was the great Dr James Gregory, who held the Chair of the Theory of Medicine, and on 30th December 1789 was elevated to that of the Practice of Medicine. There was next Dr Home, Professor of Materia Medica, who was appointed to the Chair of the Practice of Medicine in 1821. And lastly, we had the case of Dr Alison, to which I have already alluded. Now Dr Bennett, whose name I now beg to propose for the candidate who shall receive your suffrages, has occupied the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine for a space of seven years. He received it by the unanimous vote of the Council, and for the mode in which he has discharged its duties, I refer to the testimonials which are in your hands. These testimonials are too overwhelming in number for me to attempt even a summary of them. They establish the fact to my mind beyond a doubt that he is a man of original genius, who has contributed largely to the extension and improvement of that science to which he has devoted himself; that his reputation is known and admitted throughout Europe; and that by his labours and his discoveries he has sustained and increased the reputation of our school of medicine. ("Hear," and cheers.) Those who thus think with me cannot, I submit, decline to admit that we are called on to elevate Dr Bennett to that place of higher dignity which is now in our gift. The high place which Dr Christison holds as a consulting physician in the city is well known to all of us. A very strong desire was felt and expressed by several members of this Council that he should receive the offer of the vacant chair. That offer was not made only because it was known that it would not be accepted. His letter is before you, and in regard to it I may be permitted to explain that perplexed as I was, and as I daresay many of you also were about the course to be adopted on this occasion, I took the liberty of asking his opinion of Dr Bennett's qualifications for the vacant chair. The letter was delivered to me at a meeting here, and I rather think was intended for myself. Amidst the hurry of public business, I showed it to one or two members of Council, and it speedily got into the newspapers. Again, I refer to the testimonial of Dr Alison, whose devotion to the interests of the University we all know and appreciate; but I shall not particularise more, for the task would be endless. One other remark, and I have done. The testimonials refer to Dr Bennett's experience and success as a clinical lecturer, requisites which are also indispensable to a professor of the practice of physic. I have referred to two testimonials only—to the one, because it seemed by some to require that explanation which I have now given; to the other, because it was given by one whom we all revere. The testimonials are supported by a large body of testimony from men of science belonging to almost every part of Europe; such an amount of testimony as is rarely equalled on occasions of importance like the present, the weight of which I have felt so strong as to carry me irresistibly along with it. (Cheers.)

Bailie MORRISON, in seconding the nomination of the Lord Provost, said that, after the very able manner in which his Lordship had referred to the merits of Dr Bennett, he would not further occupy the time of the Council. He would only say that one objection made to Dr Bennett's appointment to the chair was, that he had not a large private practice. The fact was that when Dr Bennett became a candidate for his present chair, the objection raised to him was that he had no theory and too much practice; and it would be found from the

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testimonials which he then produced from Dr Christison, Dr Alison, and some of our most eminent physicians, that not only was he acquainted, in a remarkable degree, with the theory of medicine, but that he was a good practical medical man, the proof of which was that for seven years he had delivered clinical lectures to a very large class. Since that time he had for seven years longer lectured on the theory of medicine in the University, and they had it on the testimony of Dr Christison that no man could be an eminent professor of the practice of physic who had not been a clinical lecturer. Dr Bennett had had that training more than any candidate now before them, and on that ground alone he was disposed to give him his support.

Bailie BROWN DOUGLAS said he had great pleasure in proposing Dr Wood, as a gentleman who would fill the chair now vacant with great advantage to the University, and, he believed, to the city of Edinburgh. He did not think it necessary to state at length the reasons which induced him to give the preference to Dr Wood. It might be a very right thing that the Council should take as an element in filling the chair the fact that a gentleman had previously been Professor in another chair, but he for one would be very careful against committing to the idea that because a man held the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine he was therefore more competent to be appointed to the Chair of the Practice of Medicine. But, independent of this, he had come to the conclusion that Dr Wood would fill the vacant chair better than the other candidates who had been named. Looking at the testimonials, he was satisfied that a gentleman who could produce upwards of one hundred testimonials of the character which he had produced, was well qualified to fill the chair now at their disposal. Then, he was satisfied, by communication with friends who were able to judge of his merits, that his appointment would give the largest amount of satisfaction, and be very beneficial to the University. There was one great element they ought to consider in electing a gentleman to fill this chair—he referred to the amount of private practice which he might have. Now, Dr Wood had a very large private practice, and he could not believe that a man who had such a very extensive practice would not be able to teach in the Chair of the Practice of Medicine. Dr Wood, in his testimonials, referred to having at one time taken a very active interest in the affairs of the city. That, of course, gave no claim for an appointment in the University, but other things being equal, he could not disregard that claim on the part of a fellow-citizen; and therefore it gave him great pleasure to propose the appointment of Dr Wood.

Convener BANKS seconded the nomination of Dr Wood.

Treasurer DICKSON proposed Dr Laycock—a gentleman who had given ample evidence that he possessed the highest qualifications for the chair. His writings on medical subjects had gained him the friendship and the confidence of all the leading medical names that could be mentioned. In addition to his high professional qualifications, he was a most honourable man, of gentlemanly and conciliatory manners, and of that moral and religious character which was likely to have a beneficial influence on the students attending the University.

Dr RENTON, in seconding the nomination of Dr Laycock, said—It is almost unnecessary to observe that no man is equally qualified to fill every chair; that the different Professors in our University are specially qualified to do honour to their own respective chairs, and that it is the important duty of the Council to select the candidate to a vacant chair who possesses the most pre-eminent claims. The vacancy to be filled up to-day refers to a chair

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which has long been considered as “the chair” in the University, the unmistakable province of which is to teach the Practice of Physic. I rejoice that Dr Laycock has presented himself as an aspirant for that high office, and I congratulate the Council that he is a stranger, because it affords the best proof of the public confidence which is reposed in the independence of the Council as patrons, and I entertain strong hopes that, by the impartial and enlightened administration of its patronage, it will assert the principle upon which the world-wide reputation of our University is derived, and that it will on this, as on every important occasion, divest itself of all sinister influences, whether arising from professional pre-arrangements, party predilections, and local interests, and that its fiat in disposing of this honour will be “*Detur digniori.*” Dr Laycock has stated in his address to you, that he has been twenty-eight years in the profession as a student and practitioner; that after studying in London during three winter and two summer sessions at University College, he spent a session in the School of Medicine at Paris; that he received in 1836 the appointment of resident medical officer to the York County Hospital, which he held for three years; that he afterwards studied a session at the University of Gottingen; that after visiting the principal hospitals in Germany, he returned to York, where he practiced both medicine and surgery until 1842, when he was appointed Physician to the York Dispensary, and was admitted a licentiate *extra urbem* of the Royal College of Physicians of London; that he was elected to the Chair of the Practice of Physic in the York Medical School, an appointment which he now holds; and that for the last thirteen years he has had a considerable share in the advancement of public hygiene. I take leave to state that in connection with these public appointments, upwards of 3000 cases have been attended by Dr Laycock in the York County Hospital during his residence there; and that there came under his care at the York Dispensary during the thirteen years about 20,000 cases, as appears from a return furnished by one of the surgeons to the York Dispensary. Dr Laycock has also been clinical and general lecturer on the practice of physic at the York Medical School for nine summer and eight winter sessions, and many of his lectures have been published in this country, and republished in Germany, Italy, and France. The subjects of these lectures refer to a domestic clinical, and not a hospital clinical practice, where the patients are visited in their own houses by Dr Laycock and his pupils, and notes taken of the cases to which the prelections refer. This plan has the advantage of presenting the forms which disease assumes in private practice, and the treatment which the pupils afterwards as practitioners are taught to adopt. It was among this class of patients, similarly domiciled in the courts and closes of Edinburgh, that Dr Alison laboured so long, and on which he laid the foundation of his reputation as a skilful and experienced practitioner. How far Dr Laycock has availed himself of the same opportunities for the promotion of medical science, is best attested by the numerous contributions in the form of essays, reviews, and treatises, amounting to upwards of 150, arranged in the chronological catalogue appended to his testimonials. It is difficult, indeed, to understand how one so actively engaged in such an extensive dispensary and private practice as Dr Laycock was, could find time to write on so many important subjects connected with the practice of medicine; and without the intuitions of genius and the resources of a cultivated mind, such labours never could have been effected. All his writings have a practical bearing on the duties appertaining to a professor of the practice of medicine. The chief value of his writings consist in being original as well as practical, for they contain those

broad and comprehensive views which only a mind law-seeing can form; and they evince equally the power of applying those laws to the facts which he observes. Dr Laycock is the reverse of a dogmatist. He is no visionary theorist, nor mere compiler of the researches of others. Dr Renton then referred, in proof of what he said, to the testimonial of Dr Carpenter, who is such a competent authority to pronounce on the capabilities of Dr Laycock as a teacher. To specify (he continued) in detail the numerous subjects embraced by his writings (all of which peculiarly qualify him for a Professor of the Practice of Physic), would occupy an unnecessary portion of time, but Dr Laycock's "Treatise on Nervous Diseases" ought to be noticed, for it is a work in which his judgement, powers of reasoning and perception are fully recognised by the profession, for he was the first to show practitioners the important truth, that they are every day mistaking hysteria for organic disease, having subjected their patients too often to severe treatment, and frightened them and their friends with wrong opinions when there was no danger. Dr Laycock's papers on the development of a general law of vital periodicity, and of the return of epidemics, are full of original observations, and lay the foundation of a new system of vital proleptics. "The vital statistics of England," and "the public hygiene of Great Britain," have been specially reported on by Dr Laycock; and on his report of the sanitary condition of York, Mr Chadwick, one of the highest authority, has stated, "that he had no hesitation in saying that he thought it the most able report he had seen under this or any preceding inquiry into the sanitary condition of any town." The most recent exposition of Dr Laycock's general doctrines are contained in the *Review*; although a solitary instance of many it is acknowledged to contain the most complete and suggestive demonstration of the latest and best views on the practice of physic yet published. His essay "On the Reflex Function of the Brain," could only be produced by a mind of the highest capabilities, and none but one of that cast could originate or conduct such an investigation, which equally enlightens the path of medical science, and that of legal responsibility and ethics. The successful cultivation of this inquiry alone was quite sufficient to establish the immortal fame and reputation of any man. The views there recognised by eminent mental philosophers have a wide practical application to insanity in all its forms, and to all questions of moral responsibility which they largely tend to define. I cannot but refer to the high estimation in which Dr Laycock is held by all his colleagues at the York School of Medicine, and I cannot allow to pass unnoticed the importance of personal character adding dignity to the professorial chair, more especially when I consider how much the chair of Practice of Physic was exalted by the high-mindedness and classical accomplishments of the Gregorys and the philanthropic exertions of Alison; and I have no hesitation in stating that in those respects Dr Laycock will be found a worthy successor, so far as mental attainments and the highest intuitions of our nature are concerned. Whether we regard the high standing Dr Laycock holds in the profession, as attested by the most eminent authorities—of his great practical skill and experience in diagnosing and treating disease—the high estimation in which his writings are held, or his qualifications as a teacher—his claims as a candidate are well entitled to the favourable consideration of the Council; and none in my opinion is more deserving of it than Dr Laycock, who is equally qualified to do honour to our University as Professor of the Practice of Physic and Clinical teacher, and to benefit the public as a consulting physician. Had not mention been made that the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine was a preliminary step to that of the Practice of

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Physic, I would not have alluded to the subject; but I must be allowed to say that no fixed rule has been observed with regard to such a transfer. The last occupant of the Chair of the Practice of Physic was removed from the Chair of *Materia Medica*; and there is every reason to believe, if the Council had offered the same chair to the present occupant of the *Materia Medica* Chair, he would have accepted the honour of being promoted to the bishopric, and left Dr Bennett in the undisturbed possession of his curacy as Professor of the Theory of Medicine. In conclusion, Dr Renton observed, that had the vacancy been one in the Chairs of Special or General Pathology, he would have given him his undivided support, for such appointments he had the strongest claims. But while Dr Bennett had done great honour to the University by his pathological researches into diseased structure after death, Dr Laycock was more fitted for the Chair of the Practice of Physic, from his skill and experience in treating and detecting the presence of diseased action during life. He (Dr Renton) had no wish to depreciate the claims of Dr Wood, but as comparisons were unavoidable on the present occasion, he begged to state it as his humble opinion, that as Dr Laycock and Dr Wood were both labourers in the same field of professional investigation, the former had reaped a rich harvest of fame, the latter was, comparatively speaking, as yet a gleaner.

Dr SIBBALD and Mr RITCHIE having spoken in support of Dr Bennett,

The Council proceeded to take the vote on the three candidates proposed. For Dr Bennett there voted the Lord Provost, Bailie Morrison, Councillors Grieve, Crichton, Murray, Dowell, Sibbald, Ritchie, and Sir R. K. Arbuthnot—9; for Dr Wood, Bailie Brown Douglas, Convener Banks, Councillors Millar, Robertson, Lewis, M'Kinlay, Clark, Greig, Stephenson, Bell, Blackadder, and Williams—12; and for Dr Laycock, Bailies Clark and Kay, the Dean of Guild, Treasurer Dickson, Councillors Richardson, Renton, Dick, Cassels, Gray, Forrester, Hill, and Tullis—12.

Dr Bennett's name having been struck off, a division took place between Drs Laycock and Wood, with the following result: for Dr Laycock—Bailies Morrison, Clark and Kay, the Dean of Guild, Treasurer Dickson, Councillors Grieve, Richardson, Renton, Dick, Crichton, Cassels, Murray, Gray, Forrester, Hill, Sibbald, and Tullis—17; for Dr Wood—the Lord Provost, Bailie Brown Douglas, Convener Banks, Councillors Millar, Robertson, Lewis, M'Kinlay, Clark, Greig, Stephenson, Bell, Blackadder, Dowell, Williams, and Sir R. K. Arbuthnot—15. Mr Ritchie declined voting.

Dr Laycock was therefore declared the new Professor.

Edinburgh Evening Post & Scottish Record, 3 October 1855, *editorial* (A, 97, n 93)

CHAIR OF PRACTICAL MEDICINE.

The Town Council, who are the patrons of this important Chair, filled up the vacancy occasioned by the retirement of Dr Alison at their meeting yesterday. As the celebrity of the medical school of this city has hitherto been considered in a great degree bound up with the character of the occupant of this Chair, the election excited much interest among those who really feel a concern in the prosperity and reputation of our ancient University. From the circumstance, however, that a certain sectarian clique had apparently resolved to carry a candidate of their own, by whatever means, the contest assumed a peculiar aspect

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from the outset, and it was generally felt that the main difficulty would be—not so much to secure the election of the best qualified candidate as to prevent the appointment of the candidate who had least claim to the office on the score of actual merit. At one time it was hoped that the nomination of Professor Christison would have obviated the necessity of a contest likely to prove at once discreditable to the Town Council and disastrous to the University; but the ultimate resolution of that distinguished physician to refuse the appointment, even if offered to him, rendered the struggle unavoidable. Certainly from the first it was not difficult to foresee how the matter would end when it was discovered that Dr Wood and his Free Church friends were determined to divide the Council, notwithstanding that the great majority of the members, along with the profession and the public, were clearly of the opinion that Professor Bennett was incomparably the fittest candidate. This latter fact was established not merely by the superior weight of his testimonials, but by the actual results of his labours both as a teacher and practitioner, corroborated and stamped by the united recommendations of Dr Alison, Professors Simpson, {Annotation: “This corroborates the statements subsequently made as to the support which D^f. Simpson avowedly rendered to D^f Bennett. (See printed letters)”} [A, 78, 80, n 47–51] Christison, Syme, and all the most eminent members of the Faculty in this city and elsewhere. Dr Wood, however, had the favour of the Free Church party, as an active member of that exclusive body, and it was known that, (with two or three exceptions, including the Lord Provost, who deserves credit for his independence), all other considerations would be subordinated within the Council to the pressure of sectarian influence brought to bear upon it. In these circumstances, a number of the independent Councillors, seeing that an unqualified attempt to carry Dr Bennett would merely have the effect of throwing the appointment into the hands of Dr Wood, and finding that Dr Laycock, the third candidate, had acquired a preponderance of alternative votes, naturally resolved to support the latter candidate, whom they regarded as, after Dr Bennett, well qualified to fill the vacant chair. In this manner, the election came to turn not upon the comparative fitness of the respective candidates, but upon the positive unfitness of the Free Church nominee; and our belief is that, from this combination of untoward circumstances, the University has been deprived of the advantages which would have accrued from Dr Bennett’s appointment. The result is a matter of just regret, not on account of Dr Bennett personally or professionally, for a man of his great original powers and unflagging energy and devotion to his profession will confer *prestige* and eminence on any chair he may fill, but because we fear it may compromise the character of our University in the eyes of foreigners and impartial observers, who will no doubt be surprised and grieved to find that the unwearied labours and conspicuous services of such a man have failed to command the appropriate reward to which they were entitled and that mainly, as we have explained, in order to avert the consummation of a sectarian job.

In these remarks, let us not be understood as in any respect seeking to depreciate the talents or character of the successful candidate, Dr Laycock. The whole conduct of that gentleman entitles him to our respect and esteem, and the testimonials which he has produced reflect upon him the highest credit. His now acknowledged writings prove him to be an able and accomplished physician, and we trust he will not fail to realise the high promise which his past career holds out. On the other hand, we would also say, in reference to Dr Wood, in his professional capacity, that, although not justified in aspiring

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to the Chair of Alison, especially in competition with Dr Bennett, he is much esteemed in his own circle, and it is perhaps fortunate for him that he has not been placed in the false position of occupying a chair in which the associations of the past would have been ever unhappily present to react upon the permanent interests of the University.

Edinburgh News, 6 October 1855, editorial (A, 97, n 97)

THE ELECTION.

For ten days Edinburgh was as deeply agitated as if in the struggle of a contested general election. Professor Alison retired from his chair in the University; a successor was required; and the scramble for the situation has been terrible, not to say discreditable. The honour was a prize worth fighting for, and aspirants were entitled to use every legitimate avenue to success; nor have we much sympathy with that stern resolve which would not stoop to ask the suffrages of the patrons; but there is a limit to urgency on the part of candidates and their friends, and on this occasion that boundary line of propriety has been sadly overstepped by those from whom a better example might have been expected. In the late contest the professors have shown greater zeal and more direct canvassing than comported with their own dignity and position, and the vote on Tuesday showed the Town Councillors are not to be browbeaten out of their own convictions and sense of duty to the University even by professors anxious to serve their friend. Nor were the arrangements and means adopted by some of the candidates less objectionable. To organise a committee with regular committee rooms and staff of canvassers was little better than an insult to the councillors, and it is absolutely intolerable that councillors in business should be hunted day after day and night after night by parties who expect to make their business influence eke out any real or supposed want of merit in the customer's candidate. Had our Town Councillors the ordinary spirit of men they would wither such canvassers with scorn, and the combined patrons should punish, as indeed they have punished, such unworthy efforts to coerce them into the support of particular men. The Town Council exercising University patronage is a jury determining the claims of candidates from the evidence laid before it, and it would be as impertinent for individuals, whatever their station, to interfere in influencing the verdict of a jury as it is to attempt to twist the opinions of Town Councillors into a form suitable to the pretensions of 'my friend' Dr So-and-so.

Of the candidates themselves we know little except what is equally well known to the public, but of the influences which decided the election we know something, and to these we may devote a sentence. The candidates who started were many, and some of them distinguished men, but on Tuesday only three ventured to the vote—Professor Bennett, Drs. Wood of Edinburgh and Laycock of York. Judging from the testimonials and literary labours of each, the Professor was evidently the man of power in the triumvirate, but his tact was not equal to his energy. It may be quite true that bailies are not the best judges of those fit to be professors, and it may be equally true that Dr Bennett himself, as well as the profession, thought him the best and ablest man; but then bailies don't like to be told so, even indirectly, by a candidate suing for their suffrage, to say nothing respecting the popular belief in the modesty of sterling merit. Another cause operating against the success of Dr Bennett was the avowed object of his professional supporters to remove him

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from his present chair, not solely because of superior fitness for the vacant office, but as a preliminary step towards thrusting Dr Sharpy [*sic*] of London into the chair now held by Dr Bennett. This was an interference, if not a job, which the Town Council felt bound in honour to resist, and that perhaps more than any subordinate cause operated against the election of Dr Bennett, although, of course, the main reason of his rejection was the majority of the Council considering Dr Laycock better qualified to discharge the duties of the chair.

The influences acting against Dr Wood were of a different character; and notwithstanding the extraordinary industry employed on his behalf, the objections of detractors proved fatal to his claims. There is always ill will among cadgers; and the strife of a contested election always brings up all that a man's opponents can say against him justly or unjustly. Probably Dr Wood suffered in this way; and his opponents scattered the rumour broadcast, that he not only was unpopular with the profession, but that his extra-academical class had proved a conspicuous failure. Of course, both events, if they really existed, would be magnified to suit the purposes of the hour; but Dr Wood's friends did not better his position by their persistency of annoyance under the name of canvassing. Nevertheless, on Tuesday, after the Council met, they were certain of success, and on the faith of being able to dub their friend professor, a dinner of congratulation was provided in the evening. But, alas, alas! Rejoicing was turned to lamentation, and the feast of joy into a 'dredgy' over disappointed hopes. Councillor Hill, by forsaking Professor Bennett for Dr Laycock had turned their wine into vinegar. The game stood thus—Dr Laycock would fall by the first vote, and then, as between Drs Bennett and Wood, the latter would have a clear majority in the second vote; but Mr Hill preferred Dr Laycock for his second vote, and not being able to carry Dr Bennett through the second ordeal, he left him before the first division, voted for Dr Laycock, and thereby carried the man he considered second best as the successful candidate. This course upset all previous calculations, and smashed the confident expectations of Dr Wood and his friends. Whether there was not also a spice of hidden hostility to the Free Church candidate manifested we would not undertake to affirm, but certain it is that the defeat of Dr Wood has caused a greater amount of general satisfaction than either his friends and enemies could have anticipated.

Of Doctor, now Professor, Laycock, the public of Edinburgh as such know literally nothing. Although his claims were sufficient to satisfy the Town Council, the general approbation of the decision rests upon negative rather than on positive grounds. That he has been a successful practitioner, a respectable writer, and that he is a man of accomplished mind, and a gentleman in the real as well as the conventional sense of that term, appears admitted by opponents, as well as testified by friends. For the sake of our University we hope Dr Laycock will prove more than these, for such accomplishments will do little to sustain, far less extend, the reputation of our medical school. American presidents have lately been elected from a class of politicians against whom nothing was known; so, it is said, has Dr Laycock been elected to his present honour, and the public are congratulated by professional men that 'they at least know nothing against him,' a distinction creditable in its way, but clearly showing that Professor Laycock has not hitherto moved much beyond the beaten track of professional routine, otherwise he could not have failed to have some that would have had many things against him. All powerful or earnest minds have made unto themselves enemies, and we would consider it but a

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questionable kind of reputation for a great discoverer or an original thinker, the classes from which alone our professors should be taken, that all men spoke well of him. The public, however, are prepared to welcome Dr Laycock in the same spirit as induced the Council to prefer him to competitors whose failings were better known or more dwelt upon than their qualifications; and we can only hope that Professor Laycock's future career will greatly outshine the kind of negative basis on which his reputation has, we believe, been falsely or rather unwittingly placed.

Medical Times & Gazette, 6 October 1855, editorial (A, 97, n 95)

THIS WEEK.

Dr. Laycock has been elected Professor of the Practice of Physic in the University of Edinburgh, by a majority of two over Dr. Alexander Wood. In congratulating Dr. Laycock on his appointment, and the Town-Council of Edinburgh on the choice they have made, we cannot but compliment the electors upon their superiority to national prejudices, and upon the unprejudiced judgement which has induced them to elect to one of the most important chairs in their Metropolitan University, a gentleman who is neither a Scotchman, nor an alumnus of their own College. Dr Laycock is eminently worthy of the honourable position which has been awarded to him, and we wish him long life, health, and happiness to enjoy his Professorship, which he has gained entirely on the score of his own merits, and without any factitious interest whatever. {Annotation: "The Medical Times and Gazette was edited jointly by Mr Spencer T. Wells and Dr Semple, but at this date Mr Wells was in the Crimea."}

Yorkshire Gazette, 6 October 1855, editorial (A, 97, n 96)

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE.

MEDICAL CHAIR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.—Dr. Laycock of York, was on Tuesday last elected by the Council to the vacant medical chair in the University of Edinburgh. There were eight candidates, three of whom only were proposed, namely, Dr. Bennett, Dr. A. Wood, and Dr. Laycock. On the first division there voted for Dr. Wood 12, Dr. Laycock 12, Dr. Bennett 9. On the second there were 17 votes for Dr. Laycock, and 15 for Dr. Wood. Dr. Laycock was therefore elected. We congratulate our fellow citizen on his appointment. The city of York is greatly indebted to Dr. Laycock, who was the pioneer in the cause of sanitary reform, and whose valuable papers on that subject at once established his great talent, and conferred an invaluable benefit on the communities congregated in our large towns. As to Dr. Laycock's professional abilities, and his literary labours, his testimonials, adduced before the Council of Edinburgh proved that his is an European reputation; and it is an honour to the city of York that a gentleman so long resident among us should stand so high in the distinguished profession of which he is so bright an ornament. {Annotation: "The Yorkshire Gazette was edited by I. Lancelot Foster."}

Dublin Medical Press, 10 October 1855, editorial (A, 97, n 94)

ELECTION OF A PROFESSOR IN EDINBURGH.

The election of a Professor of the Practice of Medicine in Edinburgh, which we record below, cannot fail to interest our readers, not merely because of the result, but on account of the tribunal called upon to decide as to the claims of the candidates: the pretensions of the competitors have been for some time a subject of discussion, and no small amount of curiosity has prevailed to observe the conduct of a Town Council called upon to discharge a duty so different from their usual functions. Notwithstanding the apparent absurdity of the thing, it must, we think, be admitted that a body necessarily ignorant of the real questions at issue have displayed as fair an amount of sagacity and impartiality as could be expected from parties so circumstanced, and perhaps more than is usually exhibited on such occasions by persons more competent. It is true that electors did not hesitate to advocate zealously the cause of the candidate they proposed; there was little profession of extreme purity; but, everything considered, the case was fairly dealt with on its merits, and no party, we think, has a right to complain. This, it must be confessed, is not the usual result when medical men are called upon to perform similar acts, neither is it when heads of Universities are the parties entrusted with the selection; and as for Hospital Boards or Dispensary Committees, everyone knows how they act: in fact, this election must make men less positive as to the comparative value of the different methods employed to determine the qualifications of candidates for office, or as to the expediency of selecting any one plan to the total rejection of the others; and must compel people to admit that sometimes one, sometimes another, succeeds. At present the rage is all for *concours* or examination, but its effects remain to be ascertained; it may do very well for juniors, and for some appointments, but it is not applicable in all cases; that before us for example: the great advantage of it seems to be the exclusion of persons utterly incompetent, who, under existing arrangements, are liable to be appointed to public situations by the influence of friends or relatives. Even Government appointments, generally held to be made regardless of the candidate's fitness for office, are not more remarkable for their failure than those made by other authorities: looking to results, it seems, indeed, that one mode of election is as good as another, and what is odd enough, private medical schools are not at all distinguished on account of the superiority of the teachers composing them. Returning, however, to the election before us, we must not have it supposed that we prefer such a tribunal on account of its conduct on this occasion, for it is obvious that very nearly a majority of the electors were in favour of a candidate, who, however worthy, few unbiassed persons will venture to pronounce the most accomplished of the whole number. All candid observers will, we think, agree, now that the trial is over, that the race was in all fairness between Drs. LAYCOCK and BENNETT, yet the latter was placed far below another competitor whose claims, as stated by his proposer, rested not so much upon his celebrity as a teacher, writer, or original observer, as upon his good qualities as a man of business: he relied upon his success in private practice, his numerous testimonials, and the active interest he once displayed in the affairs of the city, more than his professional attainments; in fact, the motives which usually sway men of the municipal order very nearly prevailed, and the substantial pretensions which a good and successful citizen can put forward very nearly eclipsed these which scientific pursuits establish. Be all this, however, as it may, we

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are convinced that the result cannot but be favourable to the School of Edinburgh: the Chair of the Professor of the Practice of Medicine is well filled, while that of the Institutes is still occupied by a most efficient instructor; and as we have suggested lately, new blood has been infused into the University which cannot fail to have a beneficial influence. Whatever Scotchmen may think as to the policy or justice of the decisions which have placed Dr. LAYCOCK of York and Dr. ALLMAN of Dublin in the situations they now occupy, Englishmen and Irishmen will view the consummation with satisfaction, notwithstanding the evidence it affords of loss of confidence in the virtue of nationality. Giving the Town Council of Edinburgh the credit due to them for a sagacious regard for the interests of the city and its University, we should rejoice to see a similar spirit influencing the municipality of Dublin, especially with reference to the present vexed question of Government Hospital Grants, and impelling them to consult the interests of the Medical and Surgical School of Dublin rather than these individuals grasping a monopoly. {Annotation: "This leader is from the pen of Dr. Jacob of Dublin, who rendered Dr. Laycock all the assistance in his power in obtaining testimonials in Dublin."}

Unidentified Yorkshire newspaper, n.d. [c. 2nd week of October 1855], editorial (A, 97, n 99)

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY:
THE PROFESSOR'S CHAIR OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.

We are quite sure that every one of our local readers will join us in congratulating our fellow-citizen, Dr. Laycock, upon his successful contest for the Professor's Chair of the Practice of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh; and which, we have no doubt, he will fill with as much lustre and ability as those who have preceded him. The struggle was severe and the majority narrow, Dr. Laycock, however, succeeding by a majority of 2.

All of us who had the advantage of this gentleman's private friendship, and knew his cultivated and scholarly mind, will regret to lose the benefit of his society and professional labours in the city of York; but, nevertheless, we cannot forbear looking upon his elevation to the Professorship of the Practice of Medicine in the world-famed University of "Auld Reekie," or "Modern Athens," as a compliment paid to our own good city, and a recognition of abilities long appreciated by the entire Medical Profession of the Kingdom. His literary labours have been gigantic, and, for one scarcely past middle age, unexampled. We wish him all success in his more elevated sphere of action, trusting that he, too, is destined to swell the high reputation of a University which has been honoured with the labours, gifted intellects, and classical attainments of a Wilson, a Gregory, and an Allison [*sic*]. Whatever renown he may hereafter acquire the city of York will share in it; while his success is the more gratifying when we recollect the miserable quibble by which the City Council were deprived of an opportunity of testifying, unitedly, to his fitness to efficiently discharge the duties of the high and important office to which he aspired. Less than this we cannot say, seeing that we are about to lose the society of so accomplished a scholar and successful a Practitioner; and more than this, perhaps, Dr. Laycock himself would not desire us to utter. We congratulate him on his success, then, and in that congratulation, we believe the city participates.

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Daily Scotsman, 19 November 1857, report (A, 105, n 113)

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH—THE TEACHING OF CLINICAL MEDICINE.

The following is an abridgement of a communication by Dr Bennett, on the arrangements for the teaching of Clinical Medicine, which was read at the Town Council meeting on Tuesday, and referred to the Lord Provost's Committee. It is in reply to Dr Laycock's letter on the same subject:-

"In a letter by Professor Laycock, he informs you that, in accordance with the programme of the current academical year, published by your authority, and with the customary rotation of clinical teaching, it is his duty to lecture singly at the Infirmary during the ensuing winter three months and the ensuing summer three months, and to receive a corresponding portion of the fees; while I am to lecture singly during the ensuing three months. 'But,' he continues, 'within a week of the opening of the session, the Medical Faculty resolved, without my concurrence, and for reasons in a great degree, if not wholly irrelevant, to change the old method of service and teaching at the Infirmary, and to appoint Dr Bennett and me to lecture separately, simultaneously, and continuously, for nine successive months,' &c. I regret to say that these statements of Dr Laycock are wholly incorrect and inconsistent with the facts, as may be easily proved.

"The programme announces that clinical lectures on medicine will be given by Drs. Bennett and Laycock, Tuesdays and Fridays, at twelve o'clock. In this, therefore, there is nothing to support the statement that Dr Laycock is to lecture first and Dr Bennett second.

"As to the customary rotation of the clinical teaching, it has always been the custom for the senior Professor to commence the course, except in cases where such senior Professor found it inconvenient to do so. It has then been the rule, by means of private arrangement, for him to exchange his period of service with a junior. When, however, two lectures were given simultaneously by clinical professors, as was the custom from 1827 to 1846, the one lectured on Mondays and Thursdays, and the other on Tuesdays and Fridays. In these respects, therefore, nothing opposed to past custom has been sanctioned by the Medical Faculty for the ensuing session. It is true that it was impossible to announce these changes earlier, because the managers of the Infirmary, who had to be consulted about the allocation of wards, did not answer the memorial of the Medical Faculty, sent to them on the 25th of last July, until the 19th of October; and then, in consequence of Dr Laycock's objections, the subject was brought first before the Faculty, and afterwards before the Senate. On both occasions, it was clearly shown that Dr Laycock was in the wrong, he not having been supported by any Professor with the exception of Professor Simpson.

"In order to prove that Dr Laycock fully concurred in the projected change, it is only necessary to say, that the alteration in the hours had been anxiously discussed at various meetings of the Senate last winter, at which Dr Laycock was present; and that the change, to lecturing simultaneously, with separate wards, was made the subject of special agreement between Mr Syme as arbitrator, on the one part, and Dr Laycock and myself, on the other. Further, that in accordance with this agreement, and in order that it might be carried out, a committee was appointed to communicate with the managers, last July, of which Dr Laycock was one; and that he himself revised the memorial, requesting more beds, for the express purpose of carrying out a double course of lectures. . . .

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“Having, in consequence of his acceptance of Mr Syme’s award, obtained the wards and one-sixth of the fees, on the distinct understanding that in future he and I were to lecture separately and simultaneously, he, when the answer from the managers was received, raised various objections, and on the 6th November—the very day he, on the faith of the agreement, was allowed to commence his own course of clinical lectures—urged the patrons to interpose and prevent mine; publicly repudiated that agreement, and declared it had not met with his concurrence! . . .

“It has long been evident to the clinical professors that a continuance in the old course of clinical instruction, with only one hour a-day, is injurious to the student, and to the reputation of the University as a clinical school. In other seminaries great extension has been given to this most important department of medical education; and, according to the regulations of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, so many courses of clinical surgery must be followed, that it is impossible for students, who propose to obtain its diploma, to attend clinical medicine here at all. Cases have already been brought before the Faculty, of students who, although they wished to study in Edinburgh, have been obliged to go to London simply because Clinical Surgery and Clinical Medicine are given in this University at the same hour, and because they cannot attend the surgical and medical wards during the same session. With the greatest difficulty the Faculty have at length induced the various Professors to make such changes as would permit of Clinical Medicine being taught between the hours of twelve and two. By a mere mistake of the printer, it has been inserted in the programme that Clinical Surgery shall be from twelve to two, instead of Clinical Medicine. Of this Dr Laycock has kept the patrons in ignorance; and in lecturing himself at twelve, and in causing an injunction to be issued that the programme is to be strictly followed, he has nullified all the good that the change of hour was thought capable of producing.

“Again, since the classes have been opened up to the extra-academical teachers, great efforts have been made to enable them to compete, in the subject of clinical medicine, more successfully with the Professors. The managers of the Infirmary have, during the last two years, for the first time permitted a combination of three house physicians to be made for this purpose, each of whom possesses a separate series of wards, and a separate staff of assistants. Whilst the clinical professors had not fifty beds, the extra-academical teachers have advertised that ‘about 150 beds will be rendered available for clinical instruction; and every effort will be made to secure for the pupils the full advantages of so wide a field for the study of disease.’ The clinical professors have hitherto only appointed one resident physician and staff of assistants; whilst the extra-academical teachers have the privilege of nominating three resident physicians and three staffs of assistants. Now, when it is considered that such offices are, and ought to be, highly prized by clinical students, the great advantage thus offered to the opponents of the University clinic must be obvious. Instances indeed are known to the professors where students who had announced the intention of attending their class, were induced by the offer and hope of obtaining these appointments, not to do so, and to follow ever after the extra-academical clinic.

“These and other disadvantages, to which the regulations of the patrons and of the managers of the Infirmary have subjected the University Professors, the Medical Faculty have endeavoured to obviate as far as possible, and hoped to have succeeded to some slight extent, when the extraordinary letter of Dr Laycock, and consequent deliverance of

the Town Council, were made public, which has had the effect of continuing the clinical professors in their present disadvantageous position, and entailing upon their efforts in the teaching of clinical medicine a necessary failure. Nothing but Dr Laycock's inexperience and unacquaintance with the Edinburgh School of Medicine could have induced him to under-estimate the importance of these facts, or to designate the reasons on which the Medical Faculty acted as 'in a great degree, if not wholly irrelevant.'

"Although, therefore, I have been obliged, temporarily, in obedience to the strict injunction of the patrons, and to the deliverance of the Medical Faculty thereon, to supersede Dr Laycock in lecturing during the first three months of the present session, I have earnestly to beg that the patrons will immediately rescind their late resolution (which has already greatly injured the class), and authorise the changes approved of by the Medical Faculty and by the Senate.

"I trust that the patrons will see that nothing further was intended in these arrangements than doing what has been done for more than a century—viz., determining by private agreement which of the medical professors should conduct the clinical course. It was never anticipated that a professor of the practice of physic in this University would publicly endeavour to overthrow an agreement which he was understood privately to have agreed to; or that the Town Council would ever have been reduced to the necessity of maintaining their rights as patrons, by directly interfering with such matters of detail. But since both these events have occurred, it will be necessary to settle definitely all matters connected with the chair. As this, however, will occupy time, it would be well in the interval to remove the injunction, so as to put a stop, if possible, to the mischief it has already occasioned, and to assist the Medical Faculty in their efforts to place the University clinic on something like the same advantageous position as the extra-academical one."

Unidentified Edinburgh newspaper, n.d. [c. 2nd week of December 1857], report (A, 101 n 102)

THE TEACHING OF CLINICAL MEDICINE.

The following letter from Dr Laycock was then read:- "To the Right Hon. the Lord Provost, the Magistrates, and Town Council of Edinburgh, Patrons of the University,—I beg leave to ask your attention to proceedings on the part of the Medical Faculty and the Senatus Academicus of the University which, in my opinion, seriously infringes upon the privileges and emoluments of the chair which I hold by your commission. In accordance with the programme of the current academical year, published by your authority, and with the customary rotation of clinical teaching, it is my duty to lecture singly at the Infirmary (the clinical wards) during the ensuing winter three months, and the ensuing summer three months, and to receive a corresponding proportion of the fees; while Dr Bennett, my colleague, is to lecture singly during the ensuing spring three months. But, within a week of the opening session, the Medical Faculty resolved, without my concurrence and for reasons in a great degree, if not wholly, irrelevant, to change the old method of service and teaching at the Infirmary, and to appoint Dr Bennett and me to lecture separately, simultaneously, and continuously for nine successive months, thus setting up two

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competing lecturers within the University, disturbing my arrangements, by compelling me to lecture during the spring three months, and depriving me of the privilege of exclusive teaching during the spring and summer months of this session, and of the corresponding fees. Although there is room for improvement in the clinical teaching of the University, it is manifestly highly injudicious to press forward a plan unjust in itself, hastily formed, wholly untried hitherto, and the details of which must be settled when the session has already commenced, and several hours a-day are occupied with College diets—while the method of proceeding is altogether irregular, and the attempt to carry it out a dangerous precedent, and a direct encroachment upon the privileges and emoluments of my chair. I have felt it my duty on these grounds to oppose these proceedings. I therefore request the favour that you will take immediate steps to the effect that the programme for the academical year, as authorised and advertised by you, may be duly acted on, and that I may be left undisturbed in the exercise of the duties and privileges conferred upon me by your commission. I enclose the notice of the *Senatus Academicus*, and have the honour to be, my Lord Provost and gentlemen, yours, &c.

“T. LAYCOCK, M.D., Professor of the Practice of Physic.”

The following is the notice referred to in the above letter:- “Notice—Clinical Medicine.—The *Senatus* having sanctioned a resolution of the Medical Faculty that the clinical lectures be delivered according to the programme already published, with the single addition that the two Professors shall lecture on separate days—one on Mondays and Thursdays, and the other on Tuesdays and Fridays—it is hereby intimated that (Dr Laycock commencing the course on Friday, November 6, at twelve o’clock, as already intimated) Dr Bennett will commence his clinical lectures on Monday November 9, at one o’clock, in the Royal Infirmary, and continue the same Monday and Thursday throughout the session at the same hour.—University of Edinburgh, 2d November.”

Bailie BLACKADDER said there had been a great deal of discussion in the Medical Faculty on this subject. Dr Laycock had stated to him that he had consented to have it arbitrated by Professor Syme, and that Mr Syme’s decision was adverse to Dr Laycock’s views. {Annotation: “Absurd!”} Hitherto the lectures had been delivered in rotation—Dr Laycock, or whoever held his professorship, lectured for three months, and the other professors for the other three months, and so on throughout the year. But by this regulation of the Medical Faculty there would be two lectures at the same time, and this was what Dr Laycock complained of; he complained that he should be obliged to lecture all through the year instead of one portion of it only.

Bailie GRIEVE said he thought it was undesirable to go into the merits of this question, because he did not think the Patrons could pronounce a deliverance on it at present. It was, however, competent for them to pronounce a deliverance on this point—viz., whether the programme already sanctioned by the Council had been tampered with by the Medical Faculty. It did not signify to the Patrons even if Dr Laycock and the other Professors agreed to do a certain thing, for it did not follow that the Council would homologate their arrangement. He could easily understand that the Medical Faculty might lay their heads together to do something which would be extremely disadvantageous to the interests of the University. He (Bailie Grieve) thought the Council should confine itself to the case as it regarded the programme. The practice hitherto had been this: Professor Bennett had lectured clinically during the first three months of the session; Dr Laycock followed for

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the next three months, and so on. The programme sanctioned by the Council bore that these lectures should be delivered on two days of the week; the alteration now announced by the Medical Faculty was to the effect that they should be delivered four days a-week in place of two. He thought the difficulty would be met by the Council adopting the following resolution:- “The Magistrates and Town Council having considered the foregoing letter, and the printed notice therein referred to, in respect that the arrangements intimated in the said notice are at variance with the published programme of the University for the present session, and with the customary rotation of clinical teaching, and that these arrangements have been made without the sanction of the Patrons having been either asked or obtained, resolved that the published programme, and the customary rotation of clinical teaching shall be adhered to by the Professors, and that the arrangements intimated in the foresaid notice shall not, in the meantime, be acted on—leaving to the Senatus, if they shall think fit, to apply to the Patrons for their sanction to the said arrangements, or any others which they may deem proper, when such application shall be duly considered and directed the clerks to communicate this resolution to the Rev. Principal, and that he be requested to intimate the same to the Senatus Academicus and also to the individual Professors concerned.” By adopting this resolution, the Council did not pronounce any deliverance as to whether this alteration was a judicious one or not; they only maintained the *status quo* until the Senatus should think fit to ask them to sanction the alteration proposed. There was no use blinking the question; this was just the old subject over again of the Professors, at their own hand, doing what they pleased independently of the Council altogether—(hear, hear)—and now was the time for the Council to maintain their rights as patrons of the University.

Mr CASSELS seconded the resolution, which was unanimously agreed to. The Council then adjourned.

Daily Scotsman, 8 December 1857, correspondence (A, 110, n 132)

{Annotation: “dated on the day of the Dinner of the College of Physicians—Printed Tuesday Dec. 8th 1857.”}

CLINICAL MEDICINE.
TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTSMAN.

December 3, 1857.

SIR,—Although the matter in dispute between Drs Bennett and Laycock is of no public importance whatever, excepting in so far as it affects academic dignity, the subject of clinical teaching is one which ought to be considered by the patrons of the University. The Town Council have been appealed to on the matter in dispute, but it is doubtful whether they have any jurisdiction. They are not the patrons of a chair of Clinical medicine; there is no such chair in the University; and therefore there is no case, I apprehend, for them to deal with as patrons of the University. Clinical teaching by Professors is the result of an arrangement between the Medical Faculty of the College and the managers of the Infirmary; and the question is raised whether it would not be proper for the patrons of the University to cause this anomaly to cease by instituting a separate chair of Clinical

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Medicine. There is a separate chair of Clinical Surgery. It is unnecessary for me to say how the duties attached to this chair are discharged further than that the excellence of the service renders Edinburgh famous as a school of practical and scientific surgery. The existence of this chair does not exclude extra-academical teaching; on the contrary, it serves as a stimulus to rising surgeons, and the students have at once the benefit of variety of teaching and of a brilliant example. {Annotation: "Dr Simpson knew when he wrote this that it was certain[?] none but Mr Syme's certificates of attendance on lectures on Clinical Surgery could be received, all others from all other schools were invalid, by an influential interpretation of the ordinances of the University. On the other hand, there were recognised extra-academical teachers on clinical medicine. Dr Simpson subsequently attacked Mr Syme's monopoly very bitterly although his own chair had a similar monopoly, as the three months courses of midwifery given in other schools were not recognised. This disingenuousness was a striking characteristic of Dr Simpson. It will be seen that he ran over the claims of either of his own Colleagues to be the first occupant of the proposed new chair. The praise of Mr Syme was intended to gain his support for the proposal."} Why should not clinical medicine be raised to the same academic level as clinical surgery? An excellent Professor can be found among the extra-academical teachers; and the School of Medicine in Edinburgh, while it would give the exclusive services of a highly competent clinical Professor, would lose no part of the extra-academical variety. If the Town Council determine to institute a separate chair of Clinical Medicine, it is probable that their decision will meet with the general approval of the profession; and I am very certain that they will materially promote the interests of the University as a school of practical medicine.— I am, &c.

M.D.

Medical Times & Gazette, 9 January 1858, review (A, 101, n 103)

REVIEWS.

Correspondence and Statements regarding the Teaching of Clinical Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, etc. By T. LAYCOCK, M.D., Professor of the Practice of Medicine, etc. 8vo. Pp. 70. Edinburgh: 1858.

WE have seldom perused a document which has given us so much pain as the "Correspondence and Statements" just published by Dr. Laycock, the Professor of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh.

We have no wish to enter into the details of this entangled skein of bitter, unworthy, and highly unprofessional feeling, still less to pronounce any opinion as to what is right and fair, or what is wrong and unfair in the case; but what we feel bound to notice and deprecate is the *spirit* in which this sad affair has been conducted—the mean quibbling, the continued non-adherence to previous statements, the unworthy subterfuges, and, lastly, the positive deviations from truth and their consequent painful exposure.

We have no personal interest, and are in nowise partisans in the matter; indeed we look upon the original cause of the dispute as of secondary importance in comparison with the results to which it has given rise. We, in common with the Profession in general, entertain the highest respect for Dr. Christison's great talents and valuable works; but if these

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statements of Dr. Laycock be correct, (and it is impossible to imagine that he could have deliberately invented correspondence and statements by wholesale,) what can we say to the painful exposures to which they have given rise?

We will mention but one circumstance which has struck us with peculiar force. The following passage occurs in a letter from Dr. Christison to Mr. Douglas dated December 1, 1857, and published at page 62 of Dr. Laycock's pamphlet:-

"I hereby declare, therefore, that *I heard Mr. Syme read*, as the arrangement, acceded to by Drs. Bennett and Laycock for the future teaching of Clinical Medicine, the three short clauses contained in Dr. Laycock's pamphlet, page 27: That Dr. Laycock and Dr. Simpson were both present; that these gentlemen as well as the other members of the Faculty, concurred in the arrangements."

Yet at a meeting of the College Committee, Dr. Laycock says—

"Dr. Christison felt obliged to avow that *he had not heard Mr. Syme read* the three short clauses (*ante*, p. 27)."

Dr. Christison was allowed to withdraw his letter, he says to correct it, but we do not see that the corrections alter the case, which is complicated in the most extraordinary manner by direct assertions and positive contradictions, and we feel bound to ask, Is this the right mode of conducting a discussion or dispute between gentlemen and men of distinguished scientific position? Even supposing, for arguments sake, that Dr. Laycock has been unfair and grasping in his demands, and discontented with every equitable arrangement, does this, or anything else, justify such conduct? One of Dr. Laycock's concluding sentences gives a melancholy picture of the spirit in which disputes are carried on in Edinburgh. "It has been my great good fortune, it is true, to be able to rebut these painful attempts to injure me in the estimation of the patrons, the University, and the public, by the publication of documents of which the accuracy is unquestionable; but let it be supposed that I had lost or destroyed the letters in question, or that I had continually to make "corrections," what would then have been my position? I must have been inevitably borne down by hardihood of assertion, and have suffered irretrievable injury to my character and prospects."—p. 69.

Are our professional brethren of Edinburgh always to live in an atmosphere of intrigue and hatred towards one another? We know that there are many bright and honourable examples to the contrary; but it is a fact, no less sad than notorious, that the Edinburgh University has been for years the scene of constant and bitter feuds, not less discreditable to the parties than injurious to the University, and it requires no particular foresight to prognosticate that such a state of things must bring ruin upon themselves, and the good old alma mater.

Medical Times & Gazette, 16 January 1858, correspondence (A, 101, n 105)

MR. SYME AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

(TO THE EDITOR OF THE MEDICAL TIMES AND GAZETTE.)

SIR,—It is too true that, as you say, the printed papers of Dr. Laycock contain abundance of "mean quibbling," "unworthy subterfuges," and "positive deviations from truth." But whether the odium of this should be attributed to Dr. Christison, who has so

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long been distinguished by scrupulous correctness of conduct, the strictest honour, and the most unimpeachable integrity, or to the *protégé* of Dr. Simpson, is a question upon which the opinion that you have expressed may perhaps not be universally entertained. (a)

Dr. Christison's letter was returned by the gentleman to whom it was addressed, in order that he might correct an error pointed out by himself. You quote from the *original* letter, which, in accordance with honourable feeling and the usage of society, should have been considered as no longer in existence; and you hold up the author to scorn for calling attention to an inaccuracy which it contained. This inaccuracy, to say nothing of a date that did not affect the question at issue, was merely that I had "read" instead of "stated," the terms of an agreement which Dr. Laycock accepted, and afterwards repudiated.

I am, &c.

JAMES SYME

2, Rutland-street, Edinburgh, Jan. 12, 1858.

(a) We expressed no opinion: we only expressed sorrow and astonishment.—Ed.

Medical Times & Gazette, n.d. [30 January 1858], correspondence (A, 101, n 106)

MR. SYME AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

(TO THE EDITOR OF THE MEDICAL TIMES AND GAZETTE.)

SIR,—As you have thought proper to publish a contradiction of my statement, that the letter of Dr. Christison, from which you quoted, was returned to him at his own desire, for the correction of an error which he had discovered it to contain, I beg to transmit a document that should remove any doubt upon this point.

In regard to the other representations of your correspondent, my silence will not occasion any surprise to those who are acquainted with the position of their author, or the subject to which they have reference.

I am &c.

JAMES SYME

2 Rutland-street, Edinburgh, Jan. 26.

"MY DEAR SYME,—When my letter was read, for the first time, before the Committee of the Town Council and our Medical Faculty, I mentioned some corrections which were necessary, asked leave to correct the letter accordingly, and at once obtained permission to do so.

The original letter was therefore returned, with the corrections in a postscript.

Whatever may have been the impressions of others about the letter having been withdrawn, I did not propose to withdraw it, I was not asked to do so, and I would not have consented to withdraw it, had this been asked.

I am, yours always,

R. CHRISTISON.

Monday, Jan. 25, 1858."

Medical Times & Gazette, *n.d.*, [6 February 1858], *correspondence* (A, 101, n 107)

MR. SYME AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

In a letter to us this week Dr. Renton says—

“In presence of a member of the College Committee, the clerk told me this morning, when I called upon him, that on permission being given to withdraw the letter, he handed it over to Dr. Christison, who unconditionally received it. On being asked if it was being returned with reference to retraction or correction, he answered, *Certainly not*, for he considered the letter was altogether withdrawn, and therefore no notice of it was taken in the minutes of the Committee. On inspection of the City Record, I found that it contained no reference to Dr. Christison’s letter.” Dr. Renton adds:- “With reference to Mr. Syme’s worthless innuendo as to my “*position*,” I may show up his own peculiar *position* in a late important surgical operation, so far as the case bears on Pathological Science and Clinical Teaching.”

North Briton, 20 March 1858, *editorial* (A, 102, n 111)

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH—PROFESSOR SYME AGAIN.

The importance to the citizens of Edinburgh of its University, in a commercial point of view, is well known; but, apart from this consideration, her proud scholastic position has long been fondly cherished and appreciated by our citizens. Distinguished in days gone by for the eminent talents and learning of her professors, as well as the intellectual achievements of her graduates—revered at home and respected abroad—the *alma mater* of so many distinguished *alumni*, who, in every quarter of the globe, have reflected lustre on the historic pages of our country—the University of Edinburgh is one of the noblest and most valuable institutions bequeathed to us by our progenitors; and it behoves our citizens and their municipal representatives—the patrons of the University—jealously to watch over the precious trust confided to them, and to uphold her in the high position she has so long and deservedly maintained in the world of science and literature.

Law, Theology, and the Classics are ably represented in our College, and there is no reason to fear the position of the Edinburgh University in these branches. Medicine, in several of the professorships is also ably represented; and the name of Laycock, while it receives honour from those who have preceded him, is a worthy addition to the bright band whose chair he so ably fills. It is with deep regret we learn that strong ill-feeling and bitter hatred have been displayed towards that gentleman by those associated with him in the professional duties of his chair.

Whilst the medical profession and the public immediately beyond it are well informed of this fact, and of the causes which induced this most unhandsome and ungenerous treatment of Dr Laycock by a section of his professional *brethren*, the citizens of Edinburgh generally, are, without doubt, in ignorance of this painful matter; and our attention was first directed to the subject by a recent article in the *Medical Times*, which says:- “We have seldom perused a document which has given us so much pain as the ‘Correspondence and Statements,’ just published by Dr Laycock, the Professor of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. We have no wish to enter into the details of this

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entangled skein of bitter, unworthy, and highly unprofessional feeling, still less to pronounce any opinion as to what is right and fair, or what is wrong and unfair in the case; but what we feel bound to notice and deprecate is the *spirit* in which this sad affair has been conducted—the *mean quibbling*, the continued non-adherence to previous statements, *the unworthy subterfuges*, and lastly, *the positive deviations from truth and their consequent painful exposure.*”

The *Medical Times* concludes its remarks by asking—“Are our professional brethren of Edinburgh always to live in an atmosphere of intrigue and hatred towards one another? We know that there are many bright and honourable examples to the contrary; *but it is a fact, no less sad than notorious, that the Edinburgh University has been for years the scene of constant and bitter feuds, not less discreditable to the parties than injurious to the University*, and it requires no particular foresight to prognosticate that such a state of things must bring ruin upon themselves, and the good old *alma mater.*”

On procuring the pamphlet thus noticed by the *Medical Times*, we were painfully struck by the position in which Dr Christison has placed himself; and it appears absolutely imperative that he should, in some way or another, put himself right not only with Professor Laycock but with the public. We also found that Dr Laycock had not spared the “first surgeon of Europe,” whose name is appended to the title of this article. We were obliged, on a former occasion, to administer the lash to him, but it has been reserved for Professor Laycock to use the knife, and unsparingly lay him open. This has been done most thoroughly, and he so completely proves every point he states against him, that the “first surgeon in Europe” comes out of his hands a beautifully “dissected specimen” of ill-feeling and bitter animosity.

The text of the pamphlet is a misunderstanding between Drs. Christison, Bennett, and Laycock, about the arrangement entered into for the division of the fees of the clinical lectures; and Dr Laycock so completely exonerates himself in every step, that not only are Drs Christison and Bennett compromised, but, Mr Syme, who acted as arbiter, is also placed in a curious and most questionable position. For truthful statement and sound argument, Dr Laycock shows himself their superior; and he has as completely demonstrated himself to be in the right, as he has shown his opponents to be in the wrong.

Smarting under the castigation received from Dr Laycock, and the remarks of the *Medical Times*, Mr Syme rushes into print, and gives vent to a coarse and miserable sneer against Dr Laycock, who, as a gentleman and a medical writer, is immeasurably his superior. In a letter to the *Medical Times* of the 16th of January, he says:- “It is too true that, as you say, the printed papers of Dr Laycock contain abundance of ‘mean quibbling,’ ‘unworthy subterfuges,’ and ‘positive deviations from truth;’ But whether the odium of this should be attributed to Dr Christison, who has so long been distinguished by scrupulous correctness of conduct, the strictest honour, and the most unimpeachable integrity, or to the *protege* of Dr Simpson, is a question upon which the opinion that you have expressed may, perhaps not be universally entertained.”

Perfectly aware that Dr Laycock had already so completely demolished Mr Syme’s title to the smallest notice of almost any kind from him, the “first surgeon” made this ill-natured attack upon Dr Simpson, who, so far as we can learn, has not deigned to give it the most trivial recognition, no doubt much to the mortification of “the first surgeon in Europe.” But one of the patrons of the University at the time of Dr Laycock’s election—

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Dr Renton, then a councillor—deemed it worthy his attention, and, in a letter to the *Medical Times* of the 23d January, still further demolishes the Syme-Christison coalition against Dr Laycock.

He says:-

“Professor Syme represents Dr Laycock as the *protege* of Dr Simpson. As a member of the Edinburgh Town Council at the period of Dr Laycock’s appointment, and one who took a deep interest in the election, and part in his nomination, and well acquainted with the professional proceedings on the occasion, I trust you will deem this communication not irrelevant to the present bearings of the question in dispute, nor unworthy a place in your periodical. Mr Syme has an undoubted right to express his strongest convictions with reference to Dr Christison, as a man of “the strictest honour, and the most unimpeachable integrity;” but I hold that he is neither entitled nor justified in conveying inferentially (what he does not hesitate to do) the imputation that Dr Laycock does not possess those good qualities which he has assigned to another, and far less in insinuating that the public sympathises with his allegations regarding the truth of Dr Laycock’s statements.

Dr Simpson is thus implicated by his alleged “*protectorate*” of such a physician, and the town council still more so (who are the legal patrons of Dr Laycock’s chair), by the appointment of such a Professor, and my attention has been called chiefly to the latter aspect of the question by Mr Syme’s letter. Now I most solemnly affirm I never heard, during the whole course of the canvass, that Dr Simpson had either directly or indirectly interfered with a single elector. Dr Laycock was elected most honourably to himself, for he was an utter stranger, without a personal friend at the Municipal Board to support him, and in the most independent manner by the Town Council, who considered him the most eligible candidate solely on the ground of his professional testimonials, and that in defiance of an open and unrelaxed opposition, up to the last hour of the election, by a section of the Professors, who had arranged that the successor to Dr Alison should be chosen out of their number, to the exclusion of all foreign competition. It is much to be regretted that Dr Laycock, after his induction into office, should not have received from his quondam opponents that right hand of fellowship which he had every title to claim and expect, and which they, in duty and honour, were equally bound to have bestowed—a fellowship which, if conscientiously tendered, would, I need hardly add, have prevented a recurrence “of those constant and bitter feuds” which you have referred to so justly as being “not less discreditable to the parties, than injurious to the University.”

With reference to the dispute among the Professors, Dr Renton, in this letter, says:-

“The Committee, after hearing at two meetings the explanations of all the Professors, unanimously came to the conclusion that Dr Laycock’s conduct was most honourable throughout. Indeed, several of the members referred to unreservedly expressed their opinion to me that Dr Laycock was perfectly right, and they thought that he had been very badly used. In proof of this, the ungracious treatment which Dr Laycock had received from a section of his colleagues was openly commented on at the public meeting of the Council, when the report of the Committee was brought up.”

Instead of answering, or attempting to answer the statements of Dr Renton, Professor Syme gives a somewhat ludicrous reason for not doing so. He says “my silence will not occasion any surprise to those who are acquainted with the position of their author.” Being addressed to a London publication, this “reason” may look pretty bold, and some may

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believe it; but those at home will laugh at it. Position, forsooth! Dr Renton is as respectable a man in every respect, public and private, as Mr Syme, who has provoked enquiries about himself by his ill-advised “silence.” The son of a writer in Edinburgh, Professor Syme was lucky enough to have an uncle who went to India, and died, leaving him £20,000. A brother who got a like sum, died shortly thereafter, and so the lucky Mr Syme got another £20,000. The chair of clinical surgery, which was then held by Professor Russell, was in the market, and Mr Syme obtained it by paying him £300 a-year so long as he lived. Those in the secret knew well that Mr Syme had made this arrangement, and the correspondence between him and Dr Liston on the subject is so curious that we produce it: “Dear Liston—Do you, like some others, believe that I bought the chair of clinical surgery?” to which Liston answered—“Dear Syme—If you didn’t buy it, how did you get it?” His own position is therefore nothing to boast of; but as Dr Renton has promised particulars on that subject, we may shortly look for an exciting and interesting biography of our rather irritable townsman, the—“first surgeon in Europe.”

We now take leave of this wretched and painful subject, but, before doing so, we demand the attention of the patrons to the fatal consequences likely to arise to the best interests of the University from this state of things. It is well known that the whole proceeds from private feeling, dictated by professional jealousy of Dr Laycock. The medical faculty had provided a professor for the chair of medicine—Dr Sharpie, [*sic*] from London—who was not likely to disturb the practice of Drs. Christison and Bennett; but the patrons, for reasons mentioned in Dr Renton’s letter, preferred Dr Laycock, who, from his fame as a physician and eminence as a medical writer, has very seriously invaded their preserves.

On behalf of the public, we ask the patrons whether such unworthy motives are to be permitted to disturb the tranquillity of the University, and ignore the usefulness of the gentleman elected by them to fulfil the duties of a most important chair? On the same behalf, we demand from Dr Christison an explanation of the position into which he has betrayed himself in this unworthy controversy; and, in the name of the citizens of Edinburgh, we protest against everything written, or said to have been done, by the “first surgeon in Europe” regarding this selfish dispute, being held by our “southron” neighbours as either in *strictissima veritae*, vel in *optima fide*[.]

York Herald, 17 July 1858, editorial (A, 106, n 118)

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH. PROFESSOR LAYCOCK & PROFESSOR BENNETT.

It will be in the recollection of many of the citizens of York that Dr. Laycock was practising among them, as a physician, when, he was elected to the chair of the Practice of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh—one of the highest positions in the medical profession. The Edinburgh newspapers have been much occupied lately with discussion about a bill for the reform of the Scottish Universities, and it has come out, quite accidentally and in a curious way, that Professor Laycock has been remarkably successful in his new and most responsible position. It appears that the University of Edinburgh sent to London Dr. Bennett, a medical professor in the University, as their “delegate,” with

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instructions to watch the progress of the bill then before Parliament. Dr. Bennett had already been a professor in the University for seven years by appointment of the Town Council, when he canvassed them for promotion to the chair of the Practice of Medicine as a competitor with Dr. Laycock. Professor Bennett's merits had not been so conspicuous during that period as to lead the Town Council of Edinburgh to promote him, whereupon he bitterly resented the slight, and when in London printed and secretly circulated amongst members of the House of Commons, in the name of the University, a "statement" in which he reflected, in severe terms, upon the qualifications of several of his colleagues to fulfil the duties of the chair to which the Town Council had appointed them. But he selected Professor Laycock as a special object of his disparaging strictures, and attempted to represent his election as an utter failure. In particular, he attributed a diminution amounting to about a tenth in the number of medical students attending the University last winter (due, in fact, to the commercial crisis of last autumn), to Professor Laycock's unpopularity and incompetency. This proved on inquiry, to be a pure invention of Professor Bennett's; for it appears from the statements of the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, made to the town council upon this point, that the average attendance in Professor Laycock's class since his election, had equalled the average attendance of his distinguished predecessor in the chair (Professor Alison), and this success was attained in spite of "the openly avowed hostility" of some of Professor Laycock's colleagues. The secret document having got publicity, the Senate of the University immediately met and repudiated it as wholly unauthorized by them, and recalled Professor Bennett to give an account of his conduct. We observe from the *Daily Scotsman*, of Tuesday, that the Senate met on Monday last, and resolved that "having heard Professor Bennett's narrative and explanation, the Senatus express their disavowal of his printed statement, and their regret that he had made imputations against the credit and character of his colleagues, which neither facts nor propriety can justify." If we may judge from the correspondence and leaders in the Edinburgh newspapers, public indignation runs very high against the conduct of Professor Bennett.

Daily Express, 3 November 1858, report (A, 78, n 47)

Professor BENNETT remarked that they ought not to separate without congratulating themselves on the result of that day's election. It would seem that, in proposing Mr. Robertson, he had touched a chord that vibrated somewhat harmoniously amongst the electors, and had met with a hearty response. Thus they had succeeded in returning a gentleman to the Council who would act an independent part; and he need not say how much they wanted men of that sort there, to retrieve something of its damaged reputation. They desired to see in the Council persons of education, able to conduct themselves in a temperate and proper manner, and not bring discredit to the City. (Hear.) He would like, if they would permit him, to say a few words in reply to the most extraordinary statements that, he dared say, they had all read, and which were made at the last meeting of the Town Council. At the meeting of the ward, he stated that he conceived that the conduct of the majority had tended to throw discredit on the general body of the Corporation, and to raise among men of education the idea of a certain faithlessness in the management of public

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affairs; and he pointed, first, to their dealings in Trinity College Church, and, secondly, to their conduct in regard to the University Bill, as two flagrant instances of that faithlessness. The Lord Provost, in the Town Council, stated that he had, so far as the proceedings after the compromise in the case of the University Bill were concerned, taken no active part in the attempt to overturn the compromise in the House of Lords, and he was sure they would all be glad to hear this disclaimer from so respectable a gentleman as the Lord Provost. But Bailie Grieve, in a remarkable speech, said he never concurred in the compromise at all, and that he had always protested against it. Now, if that were the case, he held that Bailie Grieve when in London, and when sitting in the House of Commons at the time that transaction occurred, should have made them acquainted with his determination. Had he informed either party that he protested against the compromise, and intended to use every exertion on his return North to get it overturned, they would have acted in a very different manner, and so would Mr Stirling of Keir. In regard to the microscopical demonstrations, he observed that Bailie Grieve, had said, among other extraordinary things, that he (Professor Bennett) had himself put down his own class! (A laugh.) What could be more preposterous? The fact was that the College Committee took away the accommodation necessary for his demonstrations, and in consequence of their act the demonstrations came to a close. But who could imagine that a Professor would put down a subject of study to which he had given so much attention, and which for the fourteen or fifteen years he had been in Edinburgh he had done so much to promote? (Hear.) Bailie Grieve seemed to be carried away by a species of mental excitement on that occasion, for he found him saying that all his (the Professor's) other statements were perfect delusions. But they would observe that Bailie Johnston afterwards spoke of his statements as a travestie; and a travestie was turning fact into ridicule, so that these two worthy Bailies appeared to contradict each other a little. The real truth was, the statements he (Professor Bennett) made were perfectly correct, and the things took place just as he described them. Bailie Grieve stated that the paper he (Professor Bennett) published in London had been disapproved of by his colleagues in the Senatus. He would like them to understand the nature of that transaction. There were two papers in regard to this patronage question. When he arrived in London, shortly after the Lord Provost and two of the Bailies had got there, he found that they had issued a paper called a "Statement for the Town Council" of Edinburgh, in which they said, among other things, that no general complaint had been made against the Council for their exercise of patronage; and that, with the exception of certain disappointed candidates, there was an overwhelming testimony among men of science, as well as among the general public, that the Council had been guided by considerations of merit in its choice of professors, and had, in each case, selected the best candidate. In making that statement, they apparently overlooked the fact that the Commission of Parliament, usually called the Burgh Commission, had come to the conclusion that the patronage should be entirely removed from the Town Council. Well, finding that paper was making an impression on certain members of the House, he drew up a reply to it; but it so happened that the paper of his was not circulated amongst members of the House of Commons till the very day on which the subject was discussed. On the evening before, he met the Lord Provost and Bailie Johnston in the lobby of the House of Commons, and said to them "Are you going to accept the compromise of Sir William Dunbar, because if you are there will be no use for my replying to your

statement?" Upon which, Bailie Johnston said he might do as he pleased, and they were not going to give him any information. Now, he had the authority of Sir William Dunbar for saying that on the very forenoon they had agreed with him to receive the compromise. As they did not inform him, of course he sent his printed reply to certain members of the House. There were only twenty copies of that reply circulated; and they were sent only on the day of the discussion. In that paper he made a quotation from the Burgh Commission report, which he had mentioned before; and that they would remember that the members of the commission were all Whigs, and therefore not likely to throw any discredit on liberal measures. What that commission said in the passage that he quoted was to the effect that in not a single instance where corrupt influences had been exercised had the most superlative merit had any chance, unless it employed the same sinister means. Such was the real character of the canvass in this city for a chair in the University. No matter how great a man might be in any department of philosophy or science, he must go through a regular species of canvassing—he must have his committee, his supporters—he must answer all the calumnies with which he might be assailed, and must go through all the miseries of a popular election; and then the chances were that if the parties were pretty equal towards the end, the toss-up of a halfpenny, or some accidental circumstance, would decide the day. Many elections had turned on one vote; and that one vote, they could understand, might be ruled by circumstances, not such as ought to influence the mind in the election of a professor. Bailie Grieve, in that remarkable speech of his, took upon himself to say—"There were some men who went running about and making scandalous imputations, and whose tongues never ceased to utter scandal." (A laugh.) He would ask them whether that was language which ought to be employed by a patron of the University, and a man chosen to be a Magistrate, he supposed, on account of his superior wisdom? In concluding that remarkable tirade, Bailie Grieve did him (Professor Bennett) the immense compliment of comparing him with Lord Bacon, and talking of him as "clothed in academic gown, possessing the wisdom and the learning of Bacon, and, like him, 'the wisest, greatest, meanest of mankind.'" The only conclusion he could come to after that remarkable statement was that, if they could conceive another mighty intellect like Bacon returning to the earth and applying to be Professor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, he would be altogether opposed by such persons as they had now in the Council. But, of all the speeches delivered, there were none so exceedingly insidious as that of Bailie Johnston. That gentleman, however, exhibited a remarkable inacquaintance with the Reid case. He said that the trustees of the fund went against the law. They did nothing of the kind; as soon as the law was declared they immediately obeyed it. The law said that £8000 was to be set aside, or so much thereof as was thought necessary, to build a sufficient class-room for the Professor of Music. They would observe that £8000 was not to be given for that purpose, but that a sufficient sum was to be set aside to enable the parties to take as much as necessary. Of course, Professor Donaldson thought that the whole sum was small, and all along wanted to have it spent on the hall. As there were three parties, the Town Council, of course, were to settle the question. Some of the Trustees held that if they spent so large a sum as £8000, they ought to build a university hall. They would see in the papers of the day what a disturbance took place when the Principal was opening the University on Monday; and they would observe also that the Principal himself spoke of the great want of a hall for University purposes. Well, here was an opportunity of

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having a new building raised up in connection with the University, which would perfectly well have answered the purposes of Professor Donaldson, as well as accommodated the students on occasions like that of Monday. (Hear, hear.) He knew it might be said that Professor Donaldson did not think so; but the question was whether sensible men thought so. After complaining of the favouritism which the College Committee had shown in their dealings with certain professors, Professor Bennett went on to notice Bailie Johnston's charge against him, that he had endeavoured to annoy Dr Laycock, had "made him lead the life of a dog," and so on; but Bailie Johnson forgot that when Dr Laycock first appeared amongst them, he was received into the house of another Professor, and lived there for a very long time, and that Professor, though he pretended to be on his (Professor Bennett's) side, did all he could in private to damage his claims. He did not know whether such conduct met with the Bailie's approbation, but he suspected most men would have but one name for it. (Hear.) He was surprised that the Town Council did not get some notion as to the real character of the person who guided them in most of their proceedings in regard to the University. At the last election the same person threatened that if Dr Anderson did not withdraw he would get the office of Chemist to the Highland Society taken from him. One would have thought that such a circumstance as that would have enlightened the Council and the College Committee as to the character of the man and of the advice they set such value on. He concluded by saying that he was prepared to justify and prove all he had said and written in regard to the relations of the Council and the University, and by congratulating the electors on Mr Robertson's return.

The electors then dispersed.

Daily Scotsman, 5 November 1858, correspondence (A, 80, n 48)

DR. BENNETT AND THE PRACTICE OF PHYSIC CHAIR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTSMAN.

Edinburgh, 52 Queen Street,
November 4, 1858.

SIR,—Your paper of Wednesday contains a report of a speech made by Dr Bennett at a meeting of the municipal electors of St George's Ward. In that speech I am evidently allocated a share of the wild and indiscriminate abuse with which Dr Bennett assails all those who, in his opinion, did not sufficiently promote his claims to the Chair of the Practice of Physic at the election three years ago. In answer to his slanders regarding the part which I took in that election, I content myself with giving them the most unqualified and emphatic denial.

Had I felt convinced that Dr Bennett's unhappy habit of reckless assertion was as thoroughly well known to the public as it is known to the medical profession, I would have spared myself the trouble of writing this communication,—I am, &c.

J. Y. SIMPSON

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Daily Scotsman, 9 November 1858, correspondence (A, 80, n 49)

PROFESSOR SIMPSON AND THE CHAIR OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTSMAN.

1 Glenfinlas Street, November 8, 1858.

SIR,—In your paper of the 5th inst. Dr Simpson has endeavoured to clear himself of my statement as to his conduct in the canvass for the Chair of Physic by the same method as he sought to free himself from that made by Dr Douglas Maclagan in regard to the Chair of Chemistry—viz., by a public denial. I therefore now beg to state—1st, That when there was a prospect of the Chair of Physic becoming vacant, Dr Simpson wrote to my wife urgently desiring her to telegraph me from Paris; 2d, That during the subsequent canvass Dr Simpson was frequently in my house, offering advice and assistance, and taking part in the consultations of my friends; 3d, That at the same time Dr Simpson invited Dr Laycock from York to enter the field as a candidate; 4th, That during the canvass Dr Simpson maintained Dr Laycock in his house, upheld his claims to the Chair, and supplied him with the active agency of his own dependents for the solicitation of votes; 5th, That whilst this double system was in progress Dr Simpson assured me and my friends that Dr Laycock was quite harmless, since he had no chance of success, and merely wished to better his position at York by taking the opportunity of publishing testimonials of a flattering character; 6th, That as soon as it suited his purpose Dr Simpson threw off the mask, and, stating his conviction that my cause was hopeless, openly canvassed in favour of Dr Laycock; and lastly, That I never had, nor have I now, any doubt whatever that, without Dr Simpson's interference, the election would have terminated in my favour.

Dr Simpson further says:- "Had I felt convinced that Dr Bennett's unhappy habit of reckless assertion was as thoroughly well known to the public as it is known to members of the medical profession, I would have spared myself the trouble of writing this communication." On this point I have only further to state, that so fully am I convinced that both the public and the medical profession are rapidly becoming acquainted with the "habits" and true character of Dr Simpson, that I can fearlessly leave to them our respective claims to the credit of straightforward and honourable conduct.—I am, &c.

J. HUGHES BENNETT

Daily Scotsman, 13 November 1858, correspondence (A, 80, n 50)

DR BENNETT AND HIS NON-ELECTION TO THE
PRACTICE OF PHYSIC CHAIR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTSMAN.

52 Queen Street, Nov. 12, 1858.

SIR,—A few lines can, as lawyers well know, contain and convey charges which may require pages fully to expose and refute. This must serve as my apology to you and your readers for the length of the following communication.

In a letter relative to the Practice of Physic Chair, signed by Dr Bennett, and published in your paper of the 9th, the last, though the main and essential, charge which Dr Bennett attempts to bring against me (in corroboration of the slanders so unnecessarily uttered by

him in a city ward meeting) is, that, in consequence of my favouring Dr Laycock, Dr Bennett entertains a conviction thus stated in his own words:- “I never had, nor have I now, any doubt whatever that, without Dr Simpson’s interference, the election would have terminated in my favour.”

If Dr Bennett intends to pass this alleged belief of his upon your readers as an actual truth, then I can only declare that they were never subjected to a more gross and malicious attempt at imposition upon their credulity. The competition for the Physic Chair was, as will be remembered by many, limited towards its termination to three candidates, Dr Bennett, Dr Laycock, and Dr Wood. To decide between these three candidates the 33 electors had to vote twice; the candidate who had the smallest number of supporters being, as in all similar elections, struck off the list by the first vote; and the majority at the second vote deciding the election between the two remaining competitors. Of the three candidates named, Dr Wood, at the first vote, had 12 supporters, Dr Laycock 12, and Dr Bennett 9. At the second vote Dr Laycock polled 17, and Dr Wood 15—one of the 33 members of Council not voting. The battle at last was, in truth, a battle between Dr Wood, single-handed as it were, against the other two candidates; for there was no chance of Dr Wood retiring or falling at the first vote, and consequently no chance of Dr Bennett and Dr Laycock being left as the two sole competitors in the field. The result showed that Dr Laycock, when left to compete with Dr Wood, proved the successful candidate. But Dr Bennett’s charge and allegation, if it means anything, means, and can only possibly mean this, that if he had been left to compete with Dr Wood, he (Dr Bennett) would have carried the election. Now, supposing Dr Laycock had never left York or became a candidate at all—or had withdrawn before the election—or had been thrown out by the first vote—and that the field had been left entirely to Drs Wood and Bennett, then, as was well known at the time, Dr Wood would have beaten Dr Bennett, for Dr Wood would have polled 18 votes at least; while the most that Dr Bennett could have *possibly* polled was *the remaining number* of the Council—15; and probably 2 out of these would not have gone with him. {Annotation: “True! T L.”}

As the whole of Dr Bennett’s main and essential charge utterly and entirely falls before this statement, I shall not content myself or your readers with the simple allegation of its entire accuracy. To avoid all possibility of doubt or cavil, let us come to actual names and numbers. For Dr Wood, then, at the first vote, the following 12 gentlemen polled, as shown in the official and published returns, viz.:- Bailie Brown Douglas, and Messrs Banks, Millar, Robertson, Lewis, Mackinlay, John Clark, Stephenson, Bell, Blackadder, and Williams. But in addition to these 12, other 6 of the Patrons—or 18 in all—were prepared to support Dr Wood against Dr Bennett, if Dr Laycock had withdrawn or had been thrown out in the first vote, viz.:- (1) Bailie Kay; (2) Bailie George Clark; (3) Mr Fraser, Dean of Guild; (4) Mr Dickson, Treasurer to the City; (5) Mr Gray; and (6) Mr Cassells.

Now, if Dr Bennett can challenge in any degree or item the accuracy of this list of 18 electors who would have voted for Dr Wood against Dr Bennett, let him at once do so. I defy him to show any error in the enumeration. I defy him also to show that I influenced in any way a single one of these 18 voters in favour of Dr Wood or against Dr Bennett. And if Dr Bennett still goes on asseverating that, but for Dr Laycock, he would have been elected to the Physic Chair, then he must hold that 15 is a larger number than 18; for the

whole matter is, after all, reducible to that very simple problem in infantile arithmetic. Few or none of the propagators of Dr Bennett's slanders will, I believe, when once they consider these facts, have the hardihood to assert longer that Dr Wood would not have beaten Dr Bennett, or that the candidate having the 18 votes had not the majority over the candidate having 15 votes; but from what I know of Dr Bennett's paradoxical cast of mind and "straight forward" character, I have no doubt whatever that at this moment he is ready to maintain and reiterate, that *his* 15 votes would have constituted a clear and decided majority over Dr Wood's 18 votes; and that therefore, had only Dr Laycock not come forward, the election, to quote again Dr Bennett's own words, without "any doubt whatever would have terminated in his (Dr Bennett's) favour."

A few months ago, at an unusually large meeting of the Senatus Academicus of the University, summoned for the purpose, Professor Miller moved and carried that in London, in relation to the character of some of his professorial colleagues and other University matters, Dr Bennett had been guilty of printing statements which "neither facts nor propriety can at all justify." I accuse him before the public and the profession of being deliberately guilty of a repetition of the same offence now in relation to the Practice of Physic Chair.

Having disposed of the main statement and charge in Dr Bennett's letter, allow me also to notice and refute some of the minor points and insinuations which he brings forward in it.

When in the autumn of 1855, Dr Alison somewhat suddenly resolved to retire from the Chair of Physic, there were some intending candidates in Edinburgh who at once, of course, became aware of the fact, as Dr Wood, Dr Gairdner, and Dr Halliday Douglas. Others, as Dr Jenner, of London, were warned of the circumstances by their friends. {Annotation: "Sir W^m Jenner told me that D^r Simpson wrote to him. This therefore not true T.L."} I myself wrote notes intimating the vacancy to Dr Christison, who was then in Dumfriesshire, and who, in my opinion, and in the opinion of others, wished for the chair; to Dr Laycock, at York; and, if I remember aright, to Dr Neligan, of Dublin. Dr Bennett adduces against me as a primary and very grave charge forsooth, that I asked Mrs Bennett to telegraph also the vacancy to him in Paris. How I was wrong in doing this I am utterly at a loss to comprehend. It was an act of common friendship, that I would have to any dozen other friends at a distance, who in my belief were likely to become candidates for the vacant appointment. At that time I was not certain, nor I think was Mrs Bennett, that Dr Bennett would really apply for the chair, and he did not make up his mind finally to stand for it till some days after his return.

Dr Bennett next charges me with "during the canvass being frequently in his house offering advice and assistance, and taking part in the consultations of his friends." It is quite true that during the course of the canvass I was very frequently in Dr Bennett's house. For during it I attended professionally on Mrs Bennett through an alarming illness. He is quite correct also in stating that with others I often offered him advice on the subject of his canvass; but in justice to his other friends, whoever they may be, and to me, Dr Bennett ought to have also added that he almost never followed the advice of any of his friends on this or any other matter. {Annotation: "D^r Simpson one evening swept up the proof sheets of a new batch of testimonials then lying on D^r L's table for correction and carried them to D^r Bennett's, that he might write at once to all those of my friends therein

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mentioned, to give him a testimonial also, and this D^r Bennett did at D^r Simpson's instigation, as appeared by letters D^r L. subsequently received."}

But, further, argues Dr Bennett, "Dr Simpson maintained Dr Laycock in his house" when he visited Edinburgh in the course of his canvass. Dr Laycock was an old and very esteemed personal friend of mine, who had visited me and lived in my house long before this Practice of Physic vacancy and election were ever dreamt of; and though, as I told Dr Laycock on his arrival in Edinburgh, and as he knew throughout the canvass, I was individually anxious for Dr Bennett's success, {Annotation: "No! see Dr Simpson's letters [A, 61–2 n 9, 10]."} that was assuredly no reason either why Dr Laycock should not try his chances with the electors, or why he should not occupy his former room in my house if he chose. Does Dr Bennett in reality wish to maintain that I ought to have declined offering this hospitality to Dr Laycock, and to have turned away an old friend from my door, merely because he and Dr Bennett were likely (for Dr Bennett's standing was still doubtful) to be candidates before the Town Council for the same situation? There was no such wretched feelings and paltry views among the candidates themselves at that time; for shortly afterwards all of them, except Dr Bennett, who was absent at the British Association at Glasgow, dined together in my house to meet Dr Laycock.

Again, Dr Bennett states that during the canvass "Dr Simpson assured me and my friends that Dr Laycock was quite harmless, since he had no chance of success, and merely wished to be in a better position at York," &c. During all the early periods of the canvass it was certainly my sincere belief that Dr Laycock had little or no chance of ultimate success; and I think it was Dr Laycock's belief also. But when the competition became keener, a traitor, whom I shall name immediately, appeared in Dr Bennett's camp, who alienated several of Dr Bennett's expected votes from him, and greatly changed and brightened up Dr Laycock's prospects. If Dr Bennett will allow himself to speak the truth (and some of his own best supporters in the Town Council can testify to it if he refuses), he will own that as his expectations declined I freely expressed to him and others my belief that his chances were waning, while the fortunes of Dr Laycock and Dr Wood were correspondingly rising.

Lastly, Dr Bennett accuses me of having, during the canvass, "upheld Dr Laycock's claims to the chair," and latterly of having "openly canvassed in favour of Laycock." From the first announcement of Dr Alison's retirement, it appeared to me, as it appeared to other of my professorial colleagues, that if Dr Bennett would stand for the Chair of Physic, and could carry his election to it, it would be a matter of high importance to the interests of the University, as we might then have a prospect of getting Dr Bennett's vacated Chair of Physiology filled by a true and great physiologist, such as Dr Sharpey of London. Besides, Dr Bennett had good claims upon the Physic Chair. That chair was one confessedly difficult to fill, as it involved three distinct and separate kinds of duty—viz., 1. Lectures on the Practice of Physic in the University; 2. Lectures on Clinical Medicine at the Infirmary; and, 3. The duties of an Hospital Physician to that Institution. Dr Bennett had already in this medical school discharged with acceptance this triple duty; Dr Laycock had done the same in the smaller medical school of York; Dr Wood had lectured successfully for some years on the Practice of Physic here, but had not either lectured on Clinical Medicine or acted as an hospital physician. In my opinion, the relative claims of these three competitors for the vacant Professorship stood in the order in which I have now mentioned

them; and I made no concealment of that opinion. Dr Bennett avers that I “upheld Dr Laycock’s claims to the chair.” Perfectly true; but always as secondary to Dr Bennett’s claims. {Annotation: “So that he canvassed against D^r L.”} He further asserts that, “as soon as it suited his purpose, Dr Simpson, stating that my cause was hopeless, openly canvassed in favour of Dr Laycock.” In using this ungenerous and ungrateful language, no doubt Dr Bennett wishes your readers to believe that I deserted his cause early and before his cause was really hopeless. I was among the last, if not the very last, of his friends to give up hopes in the matter. Late in the evening before the nomination, I was present when two of the electors who had been Dr Bennett’s most active and earnest supporters throughout the canvass, reported to Dr Bennett that, after full enquiry, they regarded all his chances of being elected on the morrow as gone. But I did not yet deem his cause utterly hopeless till half-an-hour afterwards, when I learned that an elector whom I had that day earnestly tried to retain for Dr Bennett, and whom his friends still reckoned on, had pledged against him; {Annotation: “Bailie Gray?”} and that a second elector, opposed to Dr Bennett, but whose absence was calculated on, had come from a distance to take a prominent part next day in the proceedings of the Council. During the few hours of the next morning that remained before the nomination I would gladly indeed, if it had been in my power, have “openly canvassed” for my friend Dr Laycock, now that any hope of carrying Dr Bennett’s cause was utterly and entirely lost; but I had no opportunity nor need of doing so. Two-thirds of Dr Bennett’s supporters among the electors thought, as I have always thought, that, after Dr Bennett, Dr Laycock was the next best candidate for the vacant Chair, and they arranged and gave their votes accordingly. After the election, and from that time to this, some of Dr Bennett’s friends have, I hear, argued earnestly and selfishly that when at last, on the morning of the election, it was evident that Dr Bennett’s cause was perfectly hopeless, all his supporters, and I among them, should have abstained entirely from speaking or voting upon the relative claims of the two remaining candidates, Dr Laycock and Dr Wood. Such an intensely absurd and foolish argument certainly requires no serious refutation. And some of Dr Bennett’s friends, who latterly have used it theoretically, were far too sensible men at the time to act upon it practically. Dr Bennett’s chief advisor, near neighbour, and fastest friend, for example—Dr James Simson—has always, I understand, been both very loud and very bitter in this high moral strain; but I have in my possession a letter, addressed by that gentleman to one of Dr Bennett’s leading supporters among the Council, suggesting to him to make some arrangement with one of Dr Laycock’s leading supporters, so as to ensure Dr Laycock being carried if Dr Bennett could not be. This letter is dated some days before the election closed; and before I, at least, deemed Dr Bennett’s cause to be desperate.

But how and why, then, did Dr Bennett lose the election? Several Professors besides myself were desirous of his success, and interested themselves more or less actively in bringing his claims prominently before the electors—as Professors Goodsir, Syme, Christison, and Alison. Any professorial interest, however, that was thus used was greatly outweighed by the professional interest exerted by the medical practitioners of Edinburgh, a large majority of whom were bitterly opposed to the very thought of Dr Bennett having any proper claims upon a practical chair, as that of Physic confessedly was. There was another influence fatally at work, which proved still more disastrous to Dr Bennett’s prospects; for during the canvass there was, as I already hinted, in Dr Bennett’s camp a

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traitor who constantly checkmated all the best efforts of Dr Bennett's friends in Dr Bennett's behalf, and ultimately ruined all Dr Bennett's prospects of success. That traitor to Dr Bennett's interests was none other than Dr Bennett himself. For in his personal intercourse with the electors, he occasionally spoke with such supercilious and disparaging violence of the claims of his fellow-candidates, and with such painful arrogance and egotism of his own claims, as thoroughly to convince several electors, who were inclined to favour him, of his unfitness for such an appointment. His own temper and tongue blasted all his hopes and prospects on this as on other occasions. Men of Dr Bennett's stamp, when galled by any reverses or disappointments, are sure to find the cause of them, not in any delinquencies or errors, however plain and patent, committed by themselves, but always in the delinquencies or errors of others. Under such circumstances they themselves are always perfectly right; some other person or persons always perfectly wrong. Looking round in this spirit for whom he could blame for the loss of the Practice of Physic Chair, Dr Bennett fixed upon me—and hence the vials of wrath and abuse which he has tried to pour out upon me from that time to this.

In conclusion, let me remark that I feel deeply and painfully that I owe a thousand apologies to my brethren of the medical profession for having been driven and forced to bring a professional, or rather professorial, dispute like this before the tribunal of the public. The citizens of Edinburgh will, I trust, excuse me, seeing that it was Dr Bennett and not I that at the present time dragged the matter before them. And some of them know well that, believing that time itself would cure and arrest the evil, I have borne now for three years, without reply or complaint, all the bitter abuse and slanders that have been most industriously and maliciously circulated on the subject by Dr Bennett and one or two other leading members of the profession who have acted as his abettors and accomplices in this disturbance of the professional peace. The only occasion on which I ever before interfered to correct their inventions was when it was solemnly told to an esteemed friend of mine that my letter to Dr Laycock, announcing the vacancy was a letter containing also an offer of all my support to him in the canvass, and that this letter with this offer had been shown about in Edinburgh by Dr Laycock. The person who retailed this double fiction was the son of a physician, and the only excuse which he could give to me for it was the allegation that he had so often heard the story repeated that by the time he mentioned it to my friend he believed it to be actually true. And it is, no doubt, the case that, with some minds, the mere frequent repetition of statements which these minds knew in the first instance to be pure and unfounded inventions, at last comes in their estimation to invest such untruths with the garb and qualities of truth, and turns with them falsehoods into facts.—I am, &c.

J. Y. SIMPSON

P.S.—Dr Bennett has twice alluded in your columns to a misunderstanding between Dr Douglas Maclagan and me at the election to the Chair of Chemistry. If Dr Bennett will consult the President of the College of Surgeons and Mr Benjamin Bell on the subject he will find that long ago, at my request, the disagreement was cleared up by these gentlemen, and that Dr Maclagan is now assured that no such thing as a “threat” was meant by me when I called upon him in reference to the policy of Dr Anderson withdrawing. Nothing was possibly further from my mind than any idea of a “threat”

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when I spoke on the subject to Dr Maclagan; and nobody next day could have been more astounded than I was when I first heard of the interpretation which my old and valued friend had put upon my words.

Daily Scotsman, 18 November 1858, correspondence (A, 80, n 51)

PROFESSOR SIMPSON AND THE ELECTION TO THE
CHAIR OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SCOTSMAN

1 Glenfinlas Street, November 17, 1858.

SIR,—It is not my intention to follow Professor Simpson through the lengthy defence of his conduct in the election to the Practice of Physic Chair which was inserted in your paper of the 13th inst. In reply to an extensive letter of his, I simply stated a series of facts, every one of which he admitted. Thus he admits—1st, That he caused me to be sent for when the chair was about to become vacant; 2d, That he was frequently in my house proffering advice, which he now adds I did not take; 3d, That he invited Dr Laycock to enter the field as a candidate; 4th, That Dr Laycock lived in his house during the canvass. He takes no notice of the fact that his dependents were actively canvassing for him. 5th, That he disarmed our suspicions by the statement that Dr Laycock had no chance of obtaining the chair; and 6th, That at length announcing my case to be hopeless, he did all he could to support the success of Dr Laycock. These different facts, therefore, are not slanders, but truths which he fully admits. He even goes further, and says now as formerly my claims were superior to those of the other candidates, and that my success in the election would have been a matter of high importance to the interests of the University. But, having made these admissions and statements, he fancies that the public will be so credulous as to suppose he acted up to his professions, and supported my cause until the evening previous to the election day. Unable to deny the facts, he seriously wishes it to be deduced from them that his anxiety for my election was displayed by courteously, and at an early period, inviting several persons to come from a distance to oppose me, and that one way of serving my cause was by hospitably entertaining my adversary and enjoining all his friends to do what they could in his support. Now, anyone who knows Dr Simpson will not readily give him credit for such unspeakable folly as this, whilst those who do not know him will regard such a defence as a very poor and ludicrous attempt to deceive the public.

Dr Simpson is now anxious to persuade such of the electors as supported Dr Laycock in consequence of his representations that, had that gentleman not accepted his invitation to become a candidate, and never left York, Dr Wood and not I would have been elected. But, without subscribing to another ingenious proposition suggested by Dr Simpson—viz. that in arithmetic 15 is more than 18—I beg to inform him that his 18 votes were only 16, if so many. One of those he has counted—Baillie Clark—had promised his second vote to me, not only personally, but to my friend Dr James Simson; and how another would have voted was unknown to all parties. There was a third elector {Annotation: “Dr. Renton.”} who originally supported Dr Laycock, who, it was said, if he would not vote for me, neither would he vote for Dr Wood. Be this as it may, it is impossible to speak with certainty as to how all the electors would have voted at that time. It was only on the

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morning of the election day that I received a letter from one of my own supporters, explaining with what regret he felt it to be his duty to vote for Dr Laycock, not because he considered him the most worthy candidate, but because he thought it would be advantageous to the University to prevent the election of Dr Wood. {Annotation: "Mr. Alex. Hill. Mr. Hill denied this statement publicly."} Another elector went over from me to Dr Laycock in consequence, at the time the votes were taken, for no better reason than a desire to strengthen the winning side. Had these two electors not been tampered with, Dr Laycock would have been thrown out at the first vote; and there is the strongest probability that ultimately I should have had the majority of 17 in my favour, or at least the casting vote of the Lord Provost. An advocate of the highest respectability stated to several gentlemen only yesterday that he had been informed by Bailie Clark that Dr Simpson had called upon him with Dr Laycock *three weeks* before the election, and successfully solicited his vote for the latter, as the best man. {Annotation: "Untrue, certainly."} From the note appended to this letter, also, it will be seen that he maintained my cause to be hopeless *three days* before the election. *Two days* previously (Sunday) he proposed to Dr James Simson that my name should be withdrawn as a candidate. What becomes then of his averment that he was "the very last of my friends to give up hopes in the matter," and then only late in the evening previous to the election day? If further proof be required, I am empowered by a gentleman who was present to say that he heard Dr Laycock state before several persons that he disregarded Dr Simpson's first invitation, thinking his chance so small, but on receiving a second and more urgent communication from him, his friends advised him, with such powerful support, to enter upon his canvass. {Annotation: "untrue T.L."} Is it conceivable that Dr Laycock came to Edinburgh simply to occupy the secondary position that Dr Simpson now assigns him, or that he entered upon the canvass with the clear understanding that he who invited him to do so, and in whose house he was residing, was really doing all in his power to support another? {Annotation: "Well argued T.L."} Is it likely that a stranger in Edinburgh, and a man who occupied no great position in York, one who was not even physician to the General Hospital there, should enter upon and successfully carry out such an enterprise without that support which Dr Simpson's influence over the Town Council alone could give him? Under all these circumstances, I am fully warranted in stating, that but for his interference, the election would have terminated in my favour.

It is unnecessary to enter upon all the other subterfuges and charges Dr Simpson has indulged in. I must confess my surprise that even he could have descended to the vulgar electioneering trick of calling me my own enemy in consequence of my mode of canvassing. I deny all his allegations on this point, as I do the charge implied in Mr Miller's motion, from which I was acquitted by a subsequent resolution of the Senatus. Having seen the President of the Royal College of Surgeons, I again affirm that there was no misunderstanding on the part of Dr Douglas Maclagan, who has never retracted one word of his statement regarding Dr Simpson's conduct during the recent election to the Chair of Chemistry, "Last night," says that gentleman, in his published account of what passed, "Sunday the 27th of June, at about a quarter before ten P.M., Professor Simpson called on me, and asked me to withdraw Dr Anderson's name from the list of candidates to the Chair of Chemistry. On my still declining to take steps in this matter, Dr Simpson said to me, 'Then Dr Anderson will next year lose his appointment as chemist to the Highland

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Society.” To this I replied, that this was not in the gift of the Town Council, and that they could not work that result; to which Dr Simpson replied, in these precise words, ‘It shall be worked.’” But says Dr Simpson *now*, this was not a threat. What was it, then, and for what purpose was it made? He accuses me of painful arrogance in canvassing, but here, not satisfied with acting as dictator to the Edinburgh Town Council, he assumes absolute authority over the Highland Society also—nay, he even fixes the time (next year he said) when, at his command, a gentleman no less known for the ability than for the fidelity with which he has fulfilled his duties should be dismissed. We shall see whether that distinguished body of gentlemen are as subservient to this man as the members of the Edinburgh Town Council have been. If not, who in future will regard Dr Simpson’s threats, assertions, or denials?

In conclusion, what does Dr Simpson’s conduct amount to, even by his own confession? He professes to join a friend in battle, strikes a few strokes by his side to keep up appearances, but meanwhile calls into the field fresh adversaries, and for the sake of one of these, at the close of a long contest, and at the very crisis of the engagement, turns round and knocks his friend on the head.—I am, &c.

J. HUGHES BENNETT

From Dr James Simson to Dr Bennett

3 Glenfinlas Street, November 16 1858.

DEAR SIR,—I regret to find that Dr J. Y. Simpson has unnecessarily introduced my name into the *Scotsman* of Saturday relative to his doings in the election of Professor of the Chair of Practice of Physic in the University of Edinburgh in 1855. Although I knew how every Councillor was to vote, and have a statement in my possession relative to what was going on, and which I wrote at the time, I shall not go into the subject, as the public will not thank me for any details relative to the votes, absolute or conditional, of thirty-three Town Councillors in 1855. Suffice it to say, that my opinion is the same now as it was then—viz., that let Dr Simpson put what colour he chooses upon the matter, and notwithstanding that statistical puzzle with which he has favoured the world, the Chair of the Practice of Physic would have been filled by you but for the interference, more particularly during the last three days of the election, of your colleague Dr J. Y. Simpson. {Annotation: “No!”} I am, &c.

JAMES SIMSON

Dr Bennett

Caledonian Mercury, 22 November 1858, correspondence (A, 81, n 52)

PROFESSOR SIMPSON AND BENNETT AND THE PHYSIC CHAIR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CALEDONIAN MERCURY.

SIR,—I have no desire to interfere with the controversial points at issue between Drs Simpson and Bennett, and shall leave such personal matters to be settled by the professors themselves. But, as an elector, who took a deep interest in the canvass for the Chair of Physic, I feel called upon to state that I never heard the most remote hint from any one of

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the Councillors, with all of whom I come more or less in daily contact, of Dr Simpson having either directly or indirectly interested himself in behalf of any of the candidates. Had he done so to the extent complained of by Dr Bennett, the circumstance could not have been concealed from me. On such occasions professorial interference very early manifests itself, and in this instance it was exerted by Dr B.'s partisan colleagues in support of his claims, neither in the most delicate or dignified way. But the Council, as a body, to its credit, resisted all the special pleadings and private arrangements resorted to, and were solely motivated by a desire to maintain the fame of the University in the appointment of Dr Laycock. Time will amply vindicate their decision, in spite of all obstructive opposition—a decision which also satisfactorily proves that patronage in the hands of a body like the Town Council, acting under the surveillance of, and responsible to, public opinion, will be more impartially administered than in those of a *junto*, however learned, that would have selected out of their own number, a professor, although highly qualified for the chair he occupied, who is now held to have been unfit for the one, to which he so unwisely aspired. The charge of sectarianism against the Council is unanswerably disproved by the fact that Dr Laycock's majority consisted of electors belonging to every religious denomination in it; while the party who preferred so unjust an imputation against it, were notoriously actuated themselves by the most selfish *esprit de corps*.

I feel myself bound not to allow the present opportunity to pass over without giving the most public positive denial to the following statement contained in the latter part of Dr Bennett's letter of the 8th inst., as it conveys an unfounded attack upon the intelligence and independence of the Council Board, and a misrepresentation of the facts of the case.

Dr Bennett writes, "that I never had, nor have I now, any doubt, that without Dr Simpson's interference the election would have terminated in my favour." I can confidently appeal to the whole Council—equally to his supporters and non-supporters—that Dr Bennett *never* had any numbers approaching to a *majority* of votes; and that if either of his two rivals had retired from the contest, and left the issue to be tested between himself and the remaining one, he would not have had the slightest chance of being elected, but, on the contrary, would have sustained a more severe defeat than the one he so bitterly bemoans,—a disappointment he so ill could brook. Half-an-hour before the election, I accidentally met Dr B. in the house of a Councillor, who might have supported Dr B. on the supposed retirement of Dr Laycock, or of the still more unlikely event of Dr L. being thrown out at the first vote, but who concurred with me in advising Dr B. to retire, for we shewed him, by a *reference to ascertained pledged votes*, that *he had no chance whatever*; but to all our statements his ear was imperturbable as the nether-millstone.

There is not a more common or more certain cause misleading a man's judgement, than overweening vanity, and all the errors and mistakes peculiar to Dr Bennett, can be traced to this over-estimate of his own powers. His contemptuous disregard of the feelings, opinions, and merits of others, springs from the contracted views of a perverse construction of mind, which led him to revile the character of the Town Council as patrons of the University, by ridiculing the honest calling of its members as a disqualification for the office, forgetting all the time, that he himself, has no higher claims to parentage than that of "a poor player, That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, And then is heard no more." {Annotation: "Dr B's father was an actor."}

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The same cause that makes him hold up his head unabashed, while the sentence of the body to which he belongs still rings in the public ear, by which he stands condemned for assuming unauthorized powers in their name, and for publishing statements which, to quote their own words, "*neither facts nor propriety can at all justify.*"

That resolution of the *Senatus* remains unrescinded, and the learned body correctly appreciated the nature of Dr Bennett's feelings, when they considered that a formal acknowledgement of his services would make ample amends for its *recorded condemnation of the means which he employed*. I leave it to the public (which rarely mistakes character or misapplies motives) to decide what share personal resentment might have in his gross misrepresentations of the character and conduct of the Town Council as patrons, by way of a solatium to his injured hopes. Those, who can best sound the deep and dark workings of the political parties, and trace the snake-like windings of the University Bill, can at once perceive that Lord Derby's Government, in proposing an annual grant of public money for University reform, just conceded what the Town Council long sought and only required to enable them to effect every acknowledged and practically called-for improvement. But *that was not the all*, which was *secretly contemplated* by the Bill, for its promoters soon found in Dr Bennett, "a fellow," not made by the College of Physicians, but one "fashioned by the hand of nature," to assist the Government in inflicting—most unjustly and most undeservedly—"a heavy blow and great discouragement" to popular rights, popular institutions, and popular administration, by the substitution of central authority and irresponsible power.—I am, Sir, &c.,

JOHN RENTON, M.D., &c.

5 Eastfield, Leith, 19th Nov. 1858.

Edinburgh Evening Courant, *n.d.* [4 July 1868], *correspondence* (A, 113, n 134)

SIR JAMES SIMPSON AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP.

SIR,—One of your correspondents, in a letter on the Principalship of Edinburgh University a few days ago, assigned several weighty reasons which, in his opinion, made it unseemly and very undesirable that the curators should elect Sir James Y. Simpson to this very important office. While accrediting the distinguished *accoucheur* with many "gifts and graces," both general and professional, he demonstrated—at least, so it appeared so to me—that his appointment would prove most injurious and mischievous to the University. I may not quite agree with your correspondent as to the "genius" of Sir James; but I agree with him entirely in his conclusions, as I cannot conceive it possible, in the circumstances that have been more than once explained in the public prints, that to confer the distinguished honour proposed on the gentleman in question could prove otherwise than seriously damaging to the best interests of the University. I need not delay long over the consideration of the *claims* of Sir James Simpson to high academical distinction. Even his best friends cannot tell us what these are, or they assign reasons for them which are essentially no reasons. In no sense whatever can he be called or regarded as a man of high academical position. In connection with some of the most important branches of learning which it is the special business of a University to foster, he has only distinguished himself by his attempted public degradation of them. His sympathies are

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notoriously averse to all classical erudition, and he has done his best, or worst, to create in the mind of the public a distaste and contempt for classical studies. I presume he has done so because he himself is virtually innocent of classics, and therefore unable to appreciate the vast influence on the development of civilization exercised by the literature and history of both Greece and of Rome. At all events he is, in opposing classical training, fighting against that which is one of the main ends of a university to foster. Is such a man fitted to be the Principal of a university? There are, of course, other branches of learning, and other departments of thought, which a university is bound to teach and encourage. But I am not aware that Professor Simpson has ever shown any acquaintance with, or appreciation of, for example, the all-important studies fostered by the teachers of logic, metaphysics and moral philosophy. Rather, according to the narrow and paltry utilitarian standard he has uplifted, he has done his utmost to suppress all pursuit of genuinely philosophical acquirements, unable or unwilling to allow the momentous influence of these studies on the whole circuit of human thought, and therefore on the entire development of the nobler phases of human life. Sir James Simpson is, therefore, not in any sense an academical man—on the contrary, he is a foe and not a friend to the main objects of academical teaching. His reputation in his own profession nobody doubts or denies; but his greatest achievement—the invention of chloroform—was more of the nature of a happy-go-lucky experiment than the inevitable result of real scientific thought. The principle of a universal anaesthetic had been previously discovered by the discoverer of ether, and all that was done by Professor Simpson was the devising of a more generally applicable and more convenient embodiment of that principle. Undoubtedly his discovery of chloroform has been of immense service to humanity; but I do not see in it—the result of a mere fortunate experiment—any sustainable testimony to the academical or genuinely scientific character of the discoverer.

As, therefore, a man of no academic standing, as a man who has exhibited aversion to some of the main studies fostered by a university, and entire incapability of appreciating others; and, finally, as a man not remarkable for those punctual business habits so urgently required of a Principal, I confess that, independently even of the hostility exhibited to him by the majority of the Senatus—a fact which should at once disqualify him in the eyes of the Curators, and which in the case of any man of ordinary sensibility would have ensured a prompt withdrawal from candidature—I can see no relevant claims that can be urged in favour of Professor Simpson's aspiration to the high office of Principal, and no reasons that should decide the Curators to appoint him. I wish I could stop here, with a simple representation of the negative qualities and consequent incapacity of Sir James Simpson for the post. But I am constrained to go further, and to indicate facts and occurrences which not only demonstrate that he is unsuitable for the high office he aspires to fill, on grounds that ought to be peculiarly considered by those who exercise university patronage, but which seem to me to prove—if they are undeniable or inexplicable—that the general intelligent public must regard him as disqualified for any office of honour, dignity, and importance, such as the one in question. I know I am treading on delicate, perhaps dangerous ground; but in the interest of the University, and in the interest of the general public of Scotland, I feel bound to proceed.

I have heard, *very* much, of late, about the conduct of Professor Simpson towards several of the candidates for the Moral Philosophy Chair in our ancient and illustrious University; and if half of what is alleged be true, I consider the Curators are bound by every sentiment of honour

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and honesty, and by every sympathy with upright and straight-forward dealing, to exclude Professor Simpson from the Principalship. A Principal, if not *sans peur*, should assuredly be *sans reproche*, and it cannot, I fear, be affirmed that this is the case as regards Sir James Simpson. I will not enter minutely into details, but I may ask—1st, if it be true that Sir James, many months ago, pronounced himself favourable to the candidature of Dr Stirling; if he then identified his own application for, and hopes of obtaining the principalship with, the application and hopes of obtaining by that gentleman, of the Moral Philosophy Chair, informing him that “they two must stand or fall together,” and producing the inevitable impression that he was a strenuous supporter of Dr Stirling in his candidature for that important office? If, as I conceive cannot be otherwise, this series of questions be answered in the affirmative, I go on to inquire, 2d, Whether, notwithstanding all this, Professor Simpson encouraged Professor Flint, of St Andrews, to come forward as a candidate for the Moral Philosophy Chair; and whether it be the case, as is alleged, that Professor Flint only came forward at all because assured of “the enthusiastic support” of Sir James? I ask, third, whether, while thus transferring his affections from Dr Stirling to Professor Flint, Sir James Simpson did not continue to assure the former of his friendship and cordial support in the terms stated above; and whether, after and notwithstanding all, and without a word of explanation to either Dr Stirling or Professor Flint, he did not at the last throw his influence into the scale in favour of Dr Calderwood, thereby ensuring that his own supporters for the Principalship would vote for Dr Calderwood, and throwing over both candidates, while both continued, or were entitled to continue, to believe they were his special friends and protégés?

I ask these questions for the information of the public, convinced that no man who has acted, as these interrogations suggested Professor Simpson to have acted—if they are true—can be held qualified for the Principalship of the University of Edinburgh. I hope an answer may be forthcoming by Monday, so that the Curators may not proceed to do their duty in the darkness of doubt and suspicion.

There are many other questions I should like to ask, and which ought to be answered satisfactorily before any further honour is bestowed on Sir James Simpson. I should like to know, for example, whether it be the case, as is believed by many, that after Sir D. Brewster’s death Professor Simpson wrote [to] Lord Brougham, late Chancellor of the University, suggesting the appointment as Vice-Chancellor of Lord Provost Chambers, or Mr Adam Black, or anyone else, who might by such appointment be enabled to vote in the election of Principal. Further, I and many others are anxious to learn how far it may be true that Professor Simpson has zealously sought to excite prejudice against Sir Alexander Grant on the alleged ground of his holding so-called “Broad Church” views; and whether he devoted himself to a persevering investigation into the precedents and character of Sir Alexander with a view to damage his general reputation. “I pause for a reply,” only adding that unless the suspicions embodied in the questions I have put be demonstrated to be utterly hollow and baseless, Sir James Simpson must be held to be disqualified for any post of honour and dignity in the University of Edinburgh, in the eyes of honourable men. It is for the Curators to be satisfied on these points, and if they, or the majority of them, pass them over with seeming indifference or contempt under the influence of vehement party zeal, they themselves will deserve, and will certainly receive, the contempt of all honest and honourable citizens.—I am, &c.,

LYNX.

{ Annotation: “Probably by Professor Fraser.” }

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Edinburgh Evening Courant, 7 July 1868, report (A, 113, n 138)

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

ELECTION OF SIR ALEXANDER GRANT TO THE PRINCIPALSHIP.

{Annotation: "Wm Chambers Lord Provost."}

A meeting of the Curators of the University of Edinburgh was held yesterday for the purpose of electing a Principal in room of the late Sir David Brewster. The meeting had been adjourned from the 18th of June in order that the Lord Provost, who was at that time in England, should have an opportunity of considering the memorial by some of the Professors against the appointment of Sir James Simpson. All the Curators were present, as follows—The Lord Provost, the Lord Justice-General, Sir William Gibson Craig, Bailie Russell, Bailie Fyfe, Mr Adam Black, and Mr Milne Home. The Lord Provost presided. On this occasion the representatives of the press were admitted.

The LORD PROVOST said—Having heard the minutes and some other papers read, I now propose that we should proceed to the duty imposed upon us to-day to elect a Principal for the University of Edinburgh. I would not object to the approval of those minutes, but I must say that I regret exceedingly that the election should have been delayed from the 18th of June to this day on my account. I left Edinburgh under the impression that I would not be required in the way of giving my vote personally, and therefore I expected that the business would have been then and there concluded. It was very courteous of the curators to postpone the election on my account, but I assure you that after perusing the papers which had been submitted to me in the interval, I have not in the slightest degree altered my opinion as to who should be appointed Principal of the University. If you open my sealed letter you will find that I voted for Sir James Simpson being appointed, and nothing contained in these papers has in the slightest degree altered my opinion. We have had a memorial from certain professors and other parties referring to certain circumstances that would lead to disagreement were Sir James Simpson appointed to the office. I do not wish to say that there may not be some degree of validity in certain of these objections, but there are prevailing circumstances in my mind that would make them of no importance. In the first place, Sir James Simpson is a person who had been known to us all our lives. He is an esteemed citizen of Edinburgh. He is a man who has attained a high reputation as a medical and scientific discoverer. He has received a distinguished honour from her Majesty; and he is a person of sufficient fortune, as I understand, to enable him to do those hospitalities that are required of a Principal. There are other circumstances that are, I think, in his favour. Latterly, the University Court, of which I have the honour to be a member, has sent a request to the Senatus Academicus for regular reports as to the duties performed by several of the professors. We wish to know what are their duties, the number of their students, and what are the hours they teach, because we have reason to believe that there are some professors enjoying the status and emolument of professors who really have no classes at all, and we therefore want to know what they are about. Now, I think that in putting Sir James Simpson at the head of the Senatus we are facilitating inquiries of this kind. He is a person so estimable, and so well known for the uprightness of his character, that he will be disposed to see that the affairs of the University are administered correctly and in such a way as will be satisfactory to the University Court as well as to the public generally. There is one reason why I would not put stress on the objections which have

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been made to him. I could make statements in opposition to the remarks that have been made on this subject; but I think we should not go into any of these petty objections; I think it would be much more preferable that I should confine myself to what I have said without going into matters of a controversial nature. We have had numerous papers, public and private, with regard to Sir James Simpson, but I think that to go into the whole of these would be injudicious, and might involve us in very unpleasant consequences. I therefore, adhering to my expressed opinion and promise, have much pleasure in proposing that we proceed to this election; and I beg to nominate Sir James Y. Simpson as Principal of this University.

Bailie RUSSELL—My Lord Provost, I have great pleasure in seconding the nomination made by you, of Sir James Simpson. I consider Sir James Simpson one of the most eminent men of the day. His reputation is world wide. Wherever there is a suffering fellow-creature, that fellow-creature benefits by the works and doings of Sir James Simpson. In reference to the objections that your Lordship has mentioned, I would like you to see really what shape they are taking. The chief of them is embodied in the memorial from the Senatus of the University, from twelve gentlemen, but it appears to me that there is not a shadow of objection in it at all. It assumes the form of the well-known verse—

“I do not love thee, Doctor Fell:
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this alone I know full well,
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.”

I would like the objections to have been in a shape to deal with; but to me it appears they take no shape at all. I think the Curators by appointing Sir James Simpson would give universal satisfaction to the people of Edinburgh. I know there are a few gentlemen who prefer Sir Alexander Grant, but we cannot weigh their opinion against the great mass of people who are in favour of Sir James Simpson. I see no man who is really against Sir James Simpson, and I should have liked, though I do not expect we will be unanimous in appointing him, but I trust the majority of the Curators will be in favour of Sir James Simpson. I think it would be much more preferable to elect a man like Sir James Simpson instead of a stranger like Sir Alexander Grant or Dr Dawson, and I hope the election will fall in favour of Sir James Simpson.

Bailie FYFE—I have no hesitation whatever in saying I very cordially concur in the nomination the Lord Provost has made. I consider Sir James Simpson one of the most eminent men of this century—a man who is an honour not only to Edinburgh, but to Scotland; and I should feel as an individual Curator that I would be guilty of a great departure from the path of duty—I speak for myself—if I were to pass over a man so well-known, so universally esteemed, as Professor Simpson, and elect another individual of whom I can know almost nothing. I feel that the attempt that has been made on the part of certain of Sir James' colleagues to interfere with the act of this Court is one that I can give no countenance to. Why just suppose that an attempt were made by certain judges of the Court of Session to prevent the Government appointing anyone to preside over them—how would such an interference be treated? And I think we are just placed in very much

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the same position. It is not for the professors to judge who shall be Principal. The Act of Parliament has committed that to this Court of Curators, and on them rests the responsibility of appointing an individual in whom they have confidence, and who will administer, in a proper, dignified, and becoming way, the affairs of this great University. A great deal has been made of this memorial from these 12 individuals, and also some of the letters that had been produced at last meeting. But I am authorised to state that at least two of those gentlemen—namely, Professor Tytler and Professor Allman—have both declared that they have no objection to Sir James Simpson being appointed; and I understand from Bailie Russell that Professor Turner has the same view. Now I have got a letter from Professor Kelland, dated the 4th of this month, and addressed to Sir James Simpson, in which he says:-

“In conversation to-day, I found myself classed with those who object to your appointment as Principal. I beg to assure you that this is a complete misapprehension of my feeling in the matter. To *me* your appointment will be perfectly acceptable, and should it take place, I shall work smoothly under you. I write this in case you should find it necessary to correct mistakes.”

I am informed that all the members of the Faculty of Theology are in favour of Sir James Simpson. Several of the other professors, who have taken no part in this matter, have written letters; and one of them is from Professor Spence, this morning in which he says:-

“Understanding that the silence of those Professors who have not signed the memorial against the appointment of Sir James Simpson as Principal of the University has by some of the Curators been misconstrued into a concurrence with the opinion expressed in that memorial, I think it is right to state that my silence, and I believe that of others, is due to no such cause, but solely in deference to the judicial character of the Curatorial Court. I did not choose ultroneously to obtrude my opinion on the Court unasked, as the Curators had the power to take evidence if they deemed it necessary. In regard to the memorial before the Court, whilst I recognise the right of every member of the Senatus to use his individual influence as he may think best for the interests of the University, I must take exception to any combined action of the Senatus (on whatever side,) apart from the results of a meeting of that body, as being, if not absolutely inconsistent with academic order, at least a most inconvenient precedent, and as liable to be misunderstood at a distance as the action of the Senatus. I would have great pleasure in acting under Sir James Simpson as our Principal, as I believe his claims for the office are very strong; and that if they be ignored, especially under present circumstances, the interests of the University are likely to suffer.”

I have another from Professor Henderson, who had been asked whether he would have any objection to Sir James Simpson being appointed Principal, and he writes as follows:-

“You ask me whether I have any objection to see Sir James Simpson being elected to the office of Principal, and I beg to reply that, although Sir James and I have encountered each other in somewhat bitter controversy, I think I would heartily despise myself if I felt any objection of that account to act under him as Principal. On any other ground, I am equally free from any objection to his appointment.”

I have materials here which would enable me to answer many of those objections that have been brought forward against Sir James Simpson in the University and otherwise;

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but I am afraid it will occupy too much time. An objection has been made against him that Sir James was against classical education, but I think that charge has been answered very satisfactorily in a letter from Dr Bryce published to-day. Sir James says—

“I got a bursary, which enabled me to pass as doctor, for my classical knowledge. I have written and published several papers on subjects in ancient Greek and Roman medicine, more, I believe, than any British physician living except Dr Greenhill. Perhaps not many of my brethren of the Faculty of Arts have published more of such inquiries than I have done. (See my essays on the Greek Lykion, on physicians in the Greek and Roman armies, on Roman medicine, stamps, &c. &c.) I have published a fuller account of Phoenician commerce in connection with this and other western countries, and its relation to Greece, Syria, &c., than any other English author has done.”

Observations have been made that Sir James has taken part in the last election, but this he denies. There are some other objections which have been made, into which it may not be necessary now to enter; but one is that he is not fitted to show hospitality to distinguished scientific strangers visiting Edinburgh.

Sir WILLIAM GIBSON-CRAIG indicated that he considered it unnecessary to enter into that question.

Bailie FYFE—But all these are just floating things that go to damage a man’s character; and it is necessary that they should be put right. Sir James Simpson says—“During the last ten or twenty years, I have seen, perhaps, and entertained more scientific strangers than all the other professors. This week I have had two of them living in my house.” Bailie Fyfe concluded by expressing a hope that Sir James Simpson would be elected.

The LORD JUSTICE-GENERAL said—In making up my mind how I should vote on the present occasion I have not in the slightest degree put stress on those topics which have which have been dwelt on by Bailie Fyfe. The single question which I put to myself is, Which of these gentlemen whom we have in our power to elect is best fitted for the office and most likely as Principal to promote the wellbeing of the University? and upon that I must say I have formed a very decided opinion, which I shall now express in a very few words. I think that of the candidates—if they can indeed be properly called candidates—before us, Sir Alex. Grant is the one best fitted to fill the office of Principal. He is a man of great accomplishments, both as a scholar and a philosopher; and his administrative ability has been proved, by his work in India, to be of a higher stamp than that of any other educational man I know. On these grounds, I propose the election of Sir Alexander Grant.

Sir WILLIAM GIBSON-CRAIG said—I beg to second the nomination of Sir Alexander Grant. As I stated before, this election has given me a great deal of concern, and a great deal of anxiety, because I have great personal regard for Sir James Simpson. He has been long a friend of my family. He is my own consulting physician when I require him, and nothing could have given me greater pleasure than to have supported him, if I could have conscientiously done so. But the most important duty we have to perform is to make the appointments here, and I feel bound to set aside all influences—both political and private feelings. Having taken into consideration the claims of the different candidates, I have come to the conclusion that Sir Alexander Grant is the man best fitted to the office of Principal. I cannot disregard the remonstrance that has been assessed to us by the professors of the University. I think that in the appointment of the Principal, who is to conduct the affairs of the University, you must take care that these affairs should be

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conducted not only with discretion but with good feeling and harmony among the members of the Senatus. That is a matter which cannot be overlooked by the curators. I think that when you see so decided a feeling in this case by so many of the professors of the University, this remonstrance is entitled to be received with due respect. But I have other reasons for my vote which I do not intend to enter. I have not been swayed in the slightest degree by the small matters that have been alluded to by Bailie Fyfe, but on general, broad, and public grounds I conscientiously give my vote for Sir Alexander Grant.

Mr ADAM BLACK said—I must say that as to those charges that have been muttered one way or another I do not regard them in the least, and I do not think they should enter very strongly into our conduct on this occasion. No man can deny that there is a very strong feeling of discontent among the professors at the present time. I can say for myself that I never endured so much torture as during the last eight or ten days by one or other of them. It is not enough to say that it is a mere passing feeling of discontent. It seems to be most decided and determined; and it is upon that ground alone that I would propose to give my vote. Now, as I know that I am likely to be the mark and target at which a good many of those who may think we have done wrong in not electing Sir James Simpson may aim—that I am likely to be the target which is to receive the volley—I am glad that the reporters are present, that I may not be called upon to send a letter to the newspapers to vindicate myself, because I will state here distinctly what I have done, and the grounds upon which I am now to proceed. When the Principalship of the University fell vacant, I think I may safely say it was the desire of the curators that the office should be conferred on some one of wide and established reputation, such as Sir Roderick Murchison: and at our first meeting I proposed that it should be offered to him, but after consideration we were satisfied that it would be vain to make the offer. Sir Alexander Grant was first recommended to us by his friends as possessing very high qualifications for the office, but they assured us that unless he were appointed to both offices—the Principalship and the chair of moral philosophy—that he would not accept of either. The curators having decided against the junction of offices, this was equivalent to the withdrawal of Sir Alexander. On the 4th of last month, the curators had a private meeting, not to elect, but to compare notes and ascertain the views of the members in regard to the coming election. There were only five present, and at that time we were ignorant of the most material facts affecting the election. We had been lead to believe that Sir Alexander Grant was not a candidate, that Professor Christison had withdrawn, and that the only candidates left were Principal Tulloch, Sir James Simpson, and Dr Dawson, of M’Gill College, Montreal. There was a strong objection to the appointment of a clergyman of any denomination, and in fact the only candidates we then appeared to have were Sir James Simpson and Dr Dawson. I was one of those who said I preferred Sir James Simpson, considering him well entitled to the dignity from his great services to humanity, and the distinction he had attained as a man of genius, and the honour he had conferred on the University, and in some measure influenced by my esteem for him as an old and valued friend. The meeting was strictly private, and it had been intimated that nothing that had been said or done should transpire. Here, to prevent mistakes, I must state that I never promised Sir James my vote, and at the only time he asked it, I refused to pledge myself. I stated to my colleagues what my intention was, and in that intention I would have continued, if I could

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have done so with a faithful discharge of my duty to the University; but had I not been led to believe that the state of the case was very different from what it is, I never would have formed any such intention. I don't mean to blame those who gave erroneous information. I believe they were as much deceived as I was. At one of our first meetings we had a very strong letter from Professor Syme against the election of Sir James Simpson. That, coming from an individual, made no impression; and on making inquiry, I was assured that only two or three concurred with Professor Syme, and that the unpleasant feeling would soon die away; and at our meeting on the 4th the Lord Provost assured us that he had made particular inquiry, and that the opposition among the Professors was trifling. At the last meeting of the curators, however, I was very much startled by the memorial from twelve members of the Senatus, remonstrating against the election of Sir James Simpson, and by letters from several others to the same effect; indeed, I have reason to believe that about half of the professors are opposed to his election, and some of them very strongly. I would not have minded their opposition if it had been to an appointment to one of the University chairs, as they could have no right to interfere with any of these; but when the opposition is to the proposed president of their own body, I cannot help thinking they are entitled to inform the curators that they believe they are proceeding under an erroneous impression; and if it be true, according to the opinion of a large proportion of the professors, that the appointment would be dangerous to the University, they are fully justified in giving this information, and the curators would not be justified in disregarding it. If a pastor is imposed upon a recalcitrating congregation, the church cannot thrive, and a house divided against itself cannot stand. I have been painfully distracted between regard for my friend and my duty to the University. I feel that I should not be justified in being a party to anything so dangerous as the introduction of strife and discord into the College. There is no charge of anything serious against Sir James by his brethren, but I believe the causes of dissension are small matters, and both parties may be to blame; but these little causes of dissension are often more difficult to heal than greater ones. As a curator of the University, I am bound to avoid doing anything that would be injurious to it, and to do all I can to promote its peace and prosperity. I may be wrong, but I have the firmest conviction that it is my duty to act as I am now doing, and I dare not act otherwise towards the great institution whose interests I am solemnly bound to protect. I am happy to know that we have again before us a candidate who, if elected, will be best able to allay the unhappy dissensions which have disturbed the ruling body of the University—a man who has already proved his great administrative powers in one of the widest fields of the world, having been entrusted by Government with establishing and directing the educational institutions in Bombay—who, by his wise and successful efforts, has conferred incalculable benefits on India. His administration has earned not only the approbation of Government, but has won for him the esteem and confidence of those who have had the management of the various social, educational, and religious agencies of all denominations which are now in operation for the civilization and Christianisation of India.

The LORD PROVOST—Mr Black, in your address you refer to myself, and you say that I led you to understand there was to be little dissention.

Mr BLACK—Yes.

The LORD PROVOST—I have no recollection of speaking to you on the subject at all. I have no recollection of having led you to form an opinion in favour of Sir James Simpson.

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Mr BLACK—Most unquestionably. Some of you may recollect. Your Lordship told me most unquestionably that you had made particular enquiry.

The LORD PROVOST—I have no recollection of it.

Bailie FYFE—I think what Mr Black refers to is this—there was a charge made against Sir James Simpson that he was not on speaking terms with one-half of his colleagues. The Lord Provost made inquiry into this, and was informed that it was not true.

The LORD PROVOST—Yes, that is it. I hope you will understand that.

Mr BLACK—I certainly understood the statement differently.

The LORD PROVOST—There was a letter produced by Sir William Gibson-Craig from Professor Syme, making certain imputations connected with Sir James Simpson, and I thought it my duty to call on Sir James Simpson to ask whether what was said was correct or not. He said it was not. I went to a medical friend of my own, who is well acquainted with University affairs, and he said it was not correct. Sir James was not on speaking terms with one or two of his colleagues; but that was all I said. So it must not be alleged or supposed that I led Mr Black to form an opinion in regard to Sir James Simpson on that score.

Bailie RUSSELL—Three or four letters were produced by Mr Milne Home, but they were not minuted, as they were not documents sent into the curatorial court. I want that stated for my own sake, because I have been charged in the public newspapers with having withheld the truth. Three or four letters were produced, but they were produced by Mr Milne Home.

Mr BLACK—What I go on is this, that there is great dissension among the professors.

Mr MILNE HOME—As junior curator, I have thought it better to let my seniors express their opinions in the first instance, and I shall now shortly state the grounds on which I think that Sir Alexander Grant is the proper person to be elected as principal of the University. I do so on three grounds—in the first place, I think he stands higher than any of the other candidates in regard to intellectual eminence; the second is, that he has shown a great deal of administrative ability, and a disposition to attend to matters of business; the third is, that he will be very acceptable—more acceptable than any of the other two candidates, and certainly than one of them, to the Senatus. I think that the regulating body of the University ought to be a body in harmony within itself, and it is quite evident that if Sir James Simpson be elected, that necessary element will not exist; because there is in that document which is signed by twelve individuals, and there are those letters which, though not in the form of a memorial, still afford evidence of the feelings of the writers. Bailie Fyfe has endeavoured to show that one or two of these individuals have signed under a mistaken notion, and under different ideas altogether. One of these is Professor Allman; but I happen to hold in my hand a letter which he wrote after signing the memorial, in which he says:—“I have come to the resolution of adding my name to those already appended in the document. I know that there are many members of Senatus who still continue to object as I did at first to sign a written document on this subject; but who, nevertheless, coincide with the views of it, as completely as any of those whose names have actually been placed on it. Among all my colleagues with whom I have had an opportunity of speaking on this subject, and they are many, I have met with but *one opinion*, that of deep regret at the possibility of Sir James Simpson being appointed to the chairmanship of the Senatus Academicus, introducing, as such an appointment must, an

element of lasting discord, and entailing on us the loss of some of our ablest and most practical members who have so often by their experience and the wisdom of their counsels aided us in matters of difficulty and delicacy, but who would henceforth feel forced to absent themselves from meetings." I cannot conceive that Professor Allman could have signed the document under a misapprehension after having expressed those feelings to me in this letter. I may mention that I have also a letter from another person who has not signed the memorial, but who states that he went to Sir James Simpson and said to him that though he could not sign the memorial he did not think he was the person who ought to be appointed to the office of Principal. So that it is not only the twelve persons who object to Sir James Simpson, but many others who have not taken the strong and bold step of coming before the public to express their opinions. I must say it was quite understood at an early period of our conference on this matter that it was very undesirable to force in any gentleman who might be in opposition to the feelings of the Senatus. It was in consequence of that understanding that we agreed—your Lordship among the rest—to make specific inquiry in regard to the candidates before us. Your Lordship accordingly went and made these inquiries, and reported.

The LORD PROVOST—I reported nothing. I called on Sir James Simpson.

Mr MILNE HOME—Just so. I was led by your Lordship to suppose differently, but I may have been mistaken. I had the same impression as Mr Black, that you had stated that you had ascertained from two gentlemen that the feeling of the Professors against Sir James Simpson was trifling.

The LORD PROVOST—No, no. I simply went and called on Sir James Simpson in regard to the statements.

Mr MILNE HOME—Whatever has been the cause of it, I think we have unquestionably written evidence that the majority of the Senatus are opposed to Sir James Simpson, and if we force him upon them, we can only anticipate dissension, strife, and discord in the governing body. But when I look at the qualifications of Sir Alexander Grant—his high scholarship, intellectual ability, and genius, and the fact that he is an eminent classical scholar, who has written on ethical philosophy, and shown other literary attainments—I consider that he is far above all the other candidates. And when we take into account that Sir James Simpson has declared his hostility against classical instruction, and that he has not written anything on philosophy—although no doubt he has made important discoveries in science which have gained him a great reputation—I do not think that he is on a par in the least degree, as regards literature, science, and philosophy, with Sir Alexander Grant. And, looking at the little evidence Sir James has shown of administrative ability, and of his caring about University affairs, I think it is evident on these grounds that the most satisfactory arrangement will be to elect Sir Alexander Grant.

On a division, the result was as follows:- For Sir James Simpson—The Lord Provost, Bailie Russell, and Bailie Fyfe—3. For Sir Alexander Grant—the Lord Justice-General, Sir William Gibson-Craig, Mr Adam Black, and Mr Milne Home—4.

The LORD PROVOST then declared that Sir Alexander Grant was elected to the Principalship; and the proceedings terminated.