HE BUILDING OF THE THREE HOUSES

1451–1870

An Oration

By

ROBERT S. RAIT, C.B.E.

PROFESSOR OF SCOTTISH HISTORY AND LITERATURE
HISTORIOGRAPHER-ROYAL FOR SCOTLAND

Delivered in the University of Glasgow on Commemoration Day 24th June, 1920

Glasgow
MacLehose, Jackson and Co.
Publishers to the University
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THE SENATE LEAVING THE OLD COLLEGE IN 1870

ARRANGED IN ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

1. Principal Barclay.
2. Rev. Dr. John Caird (afterwards Principal Caird).
3. Professor Lushington.
4. Dr. Andrew Buchanan.
5. Dr. Rainy.
6. Sir William Thomson (now Lord Kelvin).
7. Dr. Allen Thomson.
8. Professor Blackburn.
9. Rev. Dr. Weir.
10. Rev. Dr. Jackson.
11. Dr. Thomas Anderson.
12. Professor Macquorn Rankine.
13. Professor Grant.
14. Professor Nichol.
15. Dr. Gairdner.
16. Rev. Dr. W. P. Dickson.
17. Professor George G. Ramsay.
18. Professor Veitch.
19. Dr. Cowan.
20. Professor Edward Caird (now Master of Balliol).
21. Dr. Young.
22. Professor Robertson.
23. Professor Berry (now Sheriff Berry).
24. Dr. Leishman.
25. Dr. Alexander Dickson.
26. Dr. G. H. B. Macleod.

THE BUILDING OF THE THREE HOUSES

A PHOTOGRAPH, taken in 1870, is familiar to most of us who are assembled to-day in this Hall. It shows the beautiful staircase, completed in the last years of the seventeenth century, which used to lead up to the Fore Common Hall and the Principal's House in the Outer Court of the Old College, and now leads down to the Principal's House in the Outer Court of the New Buildings. On the staircase are seen in the photograph twenty-six gowned figures—the Members of the Senate of the University, with Lachlan Macpherson carrying the mace, in the act of leaving the old home for the new. Only one of those who walked in that historical procession has lived to witness our first Jubilee at Gilmorehill—our venerable and beloved Dean of the Faculties, Professor George Ramsay, the inheritor and the fulfiller of a great Glasgow tradition. The College of which the Senate, under the leadership of Principal Barclay and Professor John Caird, took its farewell in the autumn of 1870, was the second of three houses which have given a local habitation to the University of Glasgow.

Of the first of the three we know but little, and it was the misfortune of the infant university that there was little for us to know. Our founder was a distinguished man, but he has had no biographer to record the

impression which he made upon his own generation or to tell us of the training and the experience of his youth. We meet him first when he was already old and wise enough to be entrusted with a responsible mission. The young Scottish cleric, educated at St. Andrews, had studied Canon Law and become a Doctor Decretorum—possibly at Bologna—had found his way to Rome and held a post at the Papal Court under Eugenius IV., to whom he acted as Chamberlain or Chaplain ("Cubicularius"). In 1433, when we first hear of him, he was one of two Papal envoys who received a safe-conduct from Henry IV. to traverse the realm of England on their way from Italy to Scotland, and to return within two months (*Rot. Scot.* ii. p. 281). We know why he was sent, but it is a long and a tedious story, and Turnbull was not the chief actor in it; that doubtful honour belongs to his colleague, a redoubtable militant cleric, William Croyser, Archdeacon of Teviotdale. The Scottish Parliament, under the Chancellorship of John Cameron, Bishop of Glasgow, had passed Acts which were deemed by Pope Martin V. and his successor, Eugenius IV., to infringe upon the rights of the Church, and the envoys were sent to make things unpleasant for the Bishop of Glasgow. In the course of the long controversy, two Papal Legates—one of them Aeneas Sylvius—afterwards visited Scotland, and Bishop Cameron made a journey to Rome; but Turnbull passes out of the story after his visit in 1433, nor do we hear of him again until he obtained a similar safe-conduct in 1439 (*Rot. Scot.* ii. p. 315). In the end of that year, Turnbull was at Calais, on his way to Scotland, and it is natural to suppose that he had spent the intervening years in the Papal Court at Florence, and had witnessed the conflict between Eugenius IV. and the Council of Basel, culminating in

the election of the Anti-Pope, Felix V., a few months before Turnbull's return to Scotland.

The remaining years of his life were given to his own country, where he immediately received high posts in the service of the Crown. In 1440, he witnessed charters as Keeper of the Privy Seal—an office which he held until he became a Bishop (*Mag. Sig.* ii. Nos. 242, 1791). In 1441, he is described as King's Secretary—or, as we should now say, Secretary of State—and he had ecclesiastical preferment as a Canon of Glasgow (*Mag. Sig.* ii. No. 265; *Exchequer Rolls*, v. 108). Like other distinguished civil servants of the period, he frequently acted as an Auditor of the Exchequer and he was sent by the king on a diplomatic mission to England (*Rot. Scot.* ii. 329). During these years the Church in Scotland was engaged in an internal struggle between the supporters of Eugenius IV. and those of the Anti-Pope, Felix V., and we may be certain that the influence of Turnbull was exerted upon the side of Eugenius IV., who, in 1443, was duly acknowledged by an Act of Parliament, following a decision of the Provincial Council of the Scottish Church. In 1447, Turnbull was appointed Bishop of Dunkeld (Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica medii Aevi*, ii. 163); but, before he was consecrated, a vacancy occurred in the See of Glasgow, and in October 1447, he became its Bishop.

Bishop Turnbull presided over the diocese of Glasgow for less than seven years, but they were memorable years in the history of Glasgow and of Scotland. He took a great part in state affairs: he continued to act as an Auditor of the Exchequer and, with some other Bishops and Abbots and great men of the Realm, he was sent in 1452 upon an important and confidential embassy from James II. to Henry VI. of England. His most

notable intervention in national affairs is the part he took in counselling James II. to declare war upon the great House of Douglas, which threatened the safety of the Crown and the Dynasty. In 1450, the Eighth Earl of Douglas went to Rome to take part in the Jubilee which had been proclaimed by Pope Nicholas V. During his absence, there were many disturbances in his wide territories, and the Bishop of Glasgow urged James to seize the opportunity of making a punitive expedition into the Douglas lands, a proceeding which led, two years later, to the Douglas conspiracy and the murder of the Earl by the King at Stirling; and ultimately, though after Turnbull's death, to the destruction of the Douglas power (*Exch. Rolls*, V. lxxxv). Turnbull had great influence over the King, and he persuaded James to abandon the evil custom by which the Crown seized upon the personal property of deceased bishops. He had also influence with Pope Nicholas V., whom he had known at the Court of Eugenius IV., and he obtained from him two privileges for the diocese of Glasgow. One was a permission to use butter on certain Fast Days, and the other was a grant by which the Jubilee Indulgence granted to pilgrims to Rome was extended to pilgrims to the Cathedral Church of Glasgow; a portion of the offerings made by the pilgrims being given to repair the Church (*Dowden's Bishops*, p. 324). Such privileges as these—or the Charter which Turnbull received from James II. elevating the city and barony of Glasgow to the rank of a Regality—may have seemed to his contemporaries to be the Bishop's most notable achievements. To the citizens of Glasgow in the middle of the fifteenth century the Royal Charter by which James II., in 1450, rewarded the long and faithful services of the Bishop by giving to the episcopal burgh every dignity and

privilege that could be conferred on a town which was not a Royal Burgh, was a very welcome gift ; for, among other advantages, it protected them from the jealousy of the burgesses of the Royal Burghs of Renfrew and Rutherglen. The men of Renfrew and of Rutherglen had been in the habit of interfering with strangers going to the market in Glasgow, and had exacted tolls and dues from them on the plea that they were encroaching on the privileges of Royal Burghs. But times have changed, and Glasgow has long ceased to fear the opposition of the combined forces of Renfrew and Rutherglen ; the privilege of eating butter has, in these latter days, tended to fall into desuetude ; and if Bishop Turnbull's work had been confined to the needs of his own generation, it would be but a venial error, even in the eyes of professors of Scottish history, if his name were well-nigh forgotten at this distance of time.

In the year 1451, the episcopate of William Turnbull was made for ever memorable by the foundation of the University of Glasgow. The Papal Bull by which a Studium Generale, possessed of rights and privileges as complete and as wide as those of any of the old Universities of Europe, was obtained from Nicholas V. at the request of King James ; but the real founder was the Bishop, to whose initiative we owe our corporate existence. We must not stop to enquire into the interesting questions which arise out of the constitutional history of the infant University. The Universities of Europe were divided, constitutionally, into two classes—those in which the students ruled the masters or doctors, and those in which the masters ruled the students. The University of Bologna, which Pope Nicholas V. suggested as our model, was the greatest of the student Universities. Its head, the Rector, was, in its early days, himself a student,

and it was the duty of the Rector and his Council, composed of students, to keep the doctors, or professors, under strict control. The Student Authorities fined the doctors for absence, for lateness, for attracting too small an audience, or for avoiding the difficult parts of their subjects ; and it was the student authorities who granted occasional holidays. But Bologna was not our actual model, for the terms of the Glasgow Bull were drafted probably by Turnbull himself, and they were incompatible with the student paradise of the early days of Bologna ; indeed, at Bologna itself, the serpent, in the shape of Boards of Control, had entered into the paradise before the middle of the fifteenth century. At Glasgow the government of the University was definitely conferred upon the Bishop, and the ominous word " Chancellor," suggestive of the master Universities, was employed. From the first, Glasgow was a University ruled by Masters, and before long they ruled with a rod, not indeed of iron, but of birch.

The work of Turnbull was the foundation of the University as a Society of teachers and students. He obtained from the King exemption for its members from all manner of taxes, and from the obligation of citizens to take part in the " watch and ward " of the town. This valuable privilege applied not merely to the corporate body but to all its individual members. The Bishop himself, as Superior of the City of Glasgow, conferred upon the University and upon all its members —including even the servants and their wives and children —local rights and privileges. The most important of these was the establishment of a University jurisdiction and of University Courts for the trial of cases in which members of the University were concerned ; but the grant included a freedom from municipal taxes ; and this

freedom still exists, though, unfortunately, not in so complete a form. The University began its work at once, finding a home for its meetings in the Chapter House of the Black Friars or of the Cathedral. In the Blackfriars Chapter House, at some unknown date in the year 1451, the University of Glasgow met for the first time and incorporated its first members. There remained the problem of the provision of Halls or of Colleges for the residence and instruction of the younger members. To the solution of this problem the Bishop would doubtless have contributed if his life had been prolonged, but he died in 1454, within about three years of the foundation of the University. He is said to have died at Rome, and in 1453, he obtained a safe-conduct from the English King for a journey to Rome ; but he was in Parliament in Edinburgh on July 17th, 1454, and the statement that he died in Rome on September 3rd of the same year is improbable.

The premature death of the founder was a misfortune which marred the whole of the early career of the University. It started life with great privileges but no endowments, and without any prospect of a permanent home. A house in which to live and to study was most of all needful for the young students who were members of the Faculty of Arts, and, from the very beginning, an attempt was made to secure some provision for them. A house in Rotten Row—probably an existing school connected with the Cathedral Chapter—was lent or hired for temporary accommodation, and two years after the foundation of the University, the Faculty of Arts taxed its graduates for the repair of a building adjoining the Blackfriars Convent. In 1457, it undertook the erection of a building in the High Street, close to the Monastery, on a site which, for more than four centuries, was to be

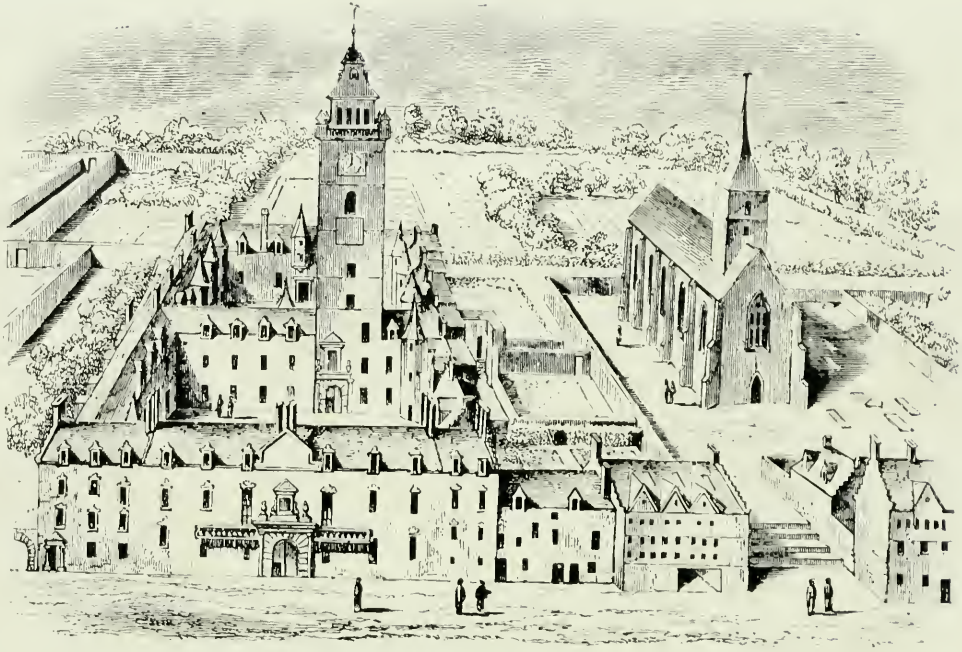
associated with the University of Glasgow. The only large benefaction which the University received in its early days was the gift of the site on which the College or Pedagogy was being erected, and this gift was made, not to the University itself, but to the Faculty of Arts, through its principal Regent, Duncan Bunch. The donor was James, first Lord Hamilton, and it was a curious irony of fate that led Hamilton to carry on the work of Turnbull. The Bishop had been the enemy of the Douglasses and the inspirer of the attack upon them, and Hamilton had been their staunch ally and supporter. He had changed sides about the time of Turnbull's death. Douglas, at the head of an army, hesitated "to put it to the touch and win or lose it all" by engaging the royal forces, and Hamilton, furious at his leader's lack of courage, was persuaded by Bishop Kennedy of St. Andrews to transfer his support to James II., who was certainly not lacking in courage or determination. By 1460 Hamilton was high in the royal favour and, being moved, as he tells us, by love of learning and by regard for virtue and the Christian Faith, he made this gift to the Faculty of Arts. But though in the Deed of Gift Hamilton described himself as the Founder of a College, and directed that he should be commemorated as the Founder, he gave nothing but the site. Seven years later, its extent was increased by the gift of some adjoining land by Thomas of Arthurle, a Chaplain. Here the members of the Faculty of Arts built their house as best they could. Small endowments were given to them from time to time, by benevolent donors—largely consisting of charges upon ecclesiastical revenues—but these were merely additions to income and no provision was made for capital expenditure. In 1537, Archbishop Gavin Dunbar, himself an alumnus of the University, proposed either to

found a new College within the University or to refound the existing College or Pedagogy, but he failed to carry out his intention, whatever it was.

The Faculty of Arts was almost the only Society within the University which received any endowments, and it was the only one which is known to have possessed a special building. The Faculty of Arts thus formed the only collegiate Society in the University, and possessed the only building which gave tangible and visible proof of the existence of a College or a University ; and there must have been, therefore, a tendency from the first for the citizens of Glasgow to regard the Faculty of Arts and the house in which that Society lived as equivalent to the University itself. The only piece of property which we know to have been possessed by the University was the beautiful fifteenth century mace which has been the symbol of University authority almost from the beginning, except for an interval of thirty years in the sixteenth century, when it was in the possession of Scottish refugees in France. But, up to the Reformation, the University maintained its existence as a corporation of which the Faculty of Arts was only one member, and in 1558, two years before the meeting of the Reformation Parliament, we still find that the Congregation of the University met on the accustomed day, 25th October, in the Chapter House of the Cathedral, where the four nations elected their procurators and the four procurators elected the Rector and his deputy. This Rectorial election is the last trace that we possess of the working of the original constitution. Although the old terminology was partially retained after the Reformation, the Congregation of the University disappeared, the separate existence of the Faculty of Arts came to an end, and the University was soon identified with the existing Pedagogy or College.

This identification, in fact, occurs, immediately after the Reformation, in a Royal Letter from Queen Mary, who made a grant of four bursarships in 1563.

The royal letter throws some light upon the condition of the modest house which was the home of the College. One part of the schools and chambers, it tells us, had been built, but the rest of the site was still vacant, so that "the samyn apperit rather to be the decay of ane Universitie nor ony wyse to be reknit ane establisst fundation." The Queen expressed a further intention of "making the said college to be provydit of sic ressonible leving that tharin the liberale sciences may be plainlie teichit," and, ignoring Lord Hamilton's claim, ordered that "the College foirsaid salbe reputit Oure Foundatioun in all tyme cuming." Neither College nor University was destined to be known by Queen Mary's name. Those who succeeded to her authority re-modelled our constitution and changed our curriculum, and provided some additional income, but did not repair the waste places. The Nova Erectio of 1577, in many ways a memorable document, did not contemplate a University with various Faculties. It was concerned with a College or Pedagogy, and when a variant was wanted, a new-fangled Greek term, Gymnasium, was adopted, and the word University was used only in a recognition of the right of the Archbishop of Glasgow to hold the office of Chancellor. The old principal regent of the Faculty of Arts became the Gymnasiarcha or Principal of the College, and one of his duties was to teach Theology. The University was thus identified with the College and the Faculty, but the Faculty was not restricted to Arts ; the only higher Faculty which had survived—Theology—was added to what had been the Faculty of Arts, and, for a time, College and Faculty and University were almost synonymous terms. But the



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS IN HIGH STREET

Faculty was a nucleus from which a revived and restored University was ultimately to be developed. Medicine and Law came to be added to it, and, in the course of time, there came into existence a teaching body—the Senate—which was wider than the Faculty, and, after a struggle, absorbed the Faculty and developed once more the old academic organisation by a division into Faculties within the University.

This, however, was a development of nineteenth century date; in the period which we have reached, the lesser of the two ancient societies—the College—had absorbed the greater—the University. But the College itself was still without a worthy or adequate home for the members of the Society, and it was not until the middle of the seventeenth century that the second of our three houses was built. This was the "old college," familiar to the older generation of Glasgow citizens, and it was built between 1630 and 1670; the vacant site was filled and then the ruinous fabric of the first house was rebuilt. The builders of the first house were few, and their names are not recorded; the builders of the second house were many, and the list of their contributions is preserved—the list, that is to say, of their promises, which were not always followed by performance. An appeal for funds was made in 1630, and the list was headed by King Charles I., who promised £200 sterling, a promise which was honoured in 1654 by Oliver, Protector. Similarly, the Marquis of Hamilton promised 1000 merks Scots, paid in 1656 by the Commonwealth Trustees who were in charge of his estate, sequestrated as that of a rebel. Montrose gave only 400 merks, but paid that sum at once; it is interesting to find that his donation was given for the Library. Other noblemen and archbishops and bishops are in the roll of benefactors, along with many lairds—

some of them from districts so remote as Sleat and Dunvegan. Parish ministers in large numbers shewed their gratitude to their Alma Mater by a liberality which must have involved a genuine and honourable self-sacrifice. The most generous of individual benefactors was Zachary Boyd, minister of the Barony, a man of learning and of wealth who is on our list of Rectors. Municipalities recognised the services rendered by the University to the surrounding district. Besides the city of Glasgow, the towns of Stirling, Ayr, and Irvine sent their contributions. Two Scottish merchants in London, David and William Muirhead, gave each £100 English money; the Scottish gentlemen who held places at Court followed, and, perhaps, bettered the halting example set by His Majesty. Building began in 1632 but proceeded slowly after 1635, and it was the intruded Cromwellian Principal, Patrick Gillespie, who, with the help and support of the Protector, advanced, and went far to complete, the building between 1654 and 1660. The College in the High Street, the home of the University from the reign of Charles II. to the middle of the reign of Queen Victoria, consisted of an inner and an outer court or quadrangle, the range of buildings which separated the two courts being crowned by a tall steeple. Its beautiful and harmonious Scottish baronial architecture is familiar to those of a younger generation only from pictures and from a portion of the old High Street front, including the doorway, which stands as an entrance gate at Gilmorehill.

The building of the third house, in which the University has its home to-day, is very recent history. Although the rooms which were used of old for student residence, had, in the course of the eighteenth century, become available for other purposes, and although large additions had been made to class-room accommodation in the early

UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS—VIEW FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

nineteenth century, a rebuilding scheme was necessary, and many reasons concurred to persuade the University to abandon the old site, the surroundings of which had so greatly changed since the time of Lord Hamilton, and even since the days of Zachary Boyd and Principal Gillespie. As two hundred years before, so, in 1870, the needs of the University were met partly by state aid and partly by local contributions. The vast increase in the wealth of Glasgow since the seventeenth century is illustrated by a comparison of the two subscription lists; there are few names of Glasgow merchants in the earlier roll of benefactors; there are many in the later roll. The citizens who had given out of their poverty in the days of Charles I. gave out of their abundance in the days of Queen Victoria. Glasgow generosity has not been diminished by Glasgow prosperity, and the new house has received large extensions in the reigns of Principal Story and of the present Principal. It is fitting that we should remember to-day not only our founders but also our recent and our latest benefactors, one of whom we are honouring this morning. And it is also fitting that in commemorating the 50th year of our new home we should remember the men who built it, not in stone and lime, but in the might of intellectual and spiritual energy. The University of Glasgow has had many famous names on its roll of teachers at many periods in its history. We cherish the name of the great mediaeval scholar, John Major, a Franco-Scot wise and bold enough to foretell and to advocate the Union of Scotland with England, who was Principal Regent in the old Pedagogy of the Faculty of Arts. We are glad to remember that our annals are adorned by the names of the great Renaissance scholars, Andrew Melville, our first Principal in the modern sense, and Robert Boyd, and John Cameron,

both of them men of European reputation, and both of them on our list of Principals. We are proud of the contribution of Glasgow to the greatest period of Scottish intellectual history, the second half of the eighteenth century, when Adam Smith and Thomas Reid and John Millar and William Cullen and Joseph Black taught within our walls. But at no period in our history did we possess greater or more famous teachers than were those who first taught in these class-rooms. Every name in the list of those who left the High Street for Gilmorehill is a distinguished name. It includes Sir William Thomson, Lord Kelvin, then in the middle of the illustrious half-century of his professorship; John Caird, soon to be our Principal, the echoes of whose refined oratory have not yet died away, and his brother, Edward Caird; John Nichol, George Macleod, and other sons of the University —two of the five whom I have named played as children in the garden of the old College. Among those who had come to us from other Universities were John Veitch and Edmund Lushington, the latter soon to be succeeded by Richard Jebb. Such were the men who gave this place its inspiration and its tradition. We remember them to-day and all others our Founders and Benefactors, for their work's sake, and with gratitude for the benefits which we and our predecessors in this place have received at their hands.

Stet fortuna Domus.

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