Introduction

Glasgow University Library possesses an extensive collection of the papers of the Thomsons, a family of eminent nineteenth-century medical men. These form part of a larger set of Cullen-Thomson material. Some of these manuscripts were donated to the Library by John Millar Thomson in 1920; the remainder was discovered in the University Library Store in 1973. Among this latter set are a series of letters between Allen Thomson (1809–84) and William Sharpey (1802–80).[1] The bulk of this correspondence consists of letters from Sharpey to Thomson; but there are also several copies and drafts of the letters Thomson sent. These are valuable because Thomson's side of the correspondence has not otherwise survived. Letters from other individuals mentioned in the correspondence are also present. It seems that Thomson brought together all these letters, along with other documents, as sources for the obituary of Sharpey he was writing. A calendar of these letters will be found in the Appendix.

This edition consists only of a selection of the letters. I have chosen those of most interest to the historian of medicine, and, in particular, those that bear on the roles played by Thomson and Sharpey as influential medical scientists and medical politicians in nineteenth-century Britain.

Sharpey is the better-known of the two; he has been the subject of a lengthy article by D. W. Taylor.[2] However, Taylor did not have access to a manuscript biography of Sharpey that Thomson composed in 1880, which provides much new information especially about Sharpey's early career.[3]

He was born at Arbroath in Forfarshire, Scotland in 1802, the stepson of a local medical practitioner. After studying at the public school in Arbroath, Sharpey proceeded in November 1817 to the University of Edinburgh where he first attended the Arts and Natural Philosophy Classes. In the following year he began the medical curriculum; his course of study in the University is outlined below.

1818–19: Anatomy, Botany
1819–20: Practice of Medicine, Clinical Medicine; Chemistry
1820–21: Institutes of Medicine; Materia Medica; Midwifery
1823: MD '*De ventriculi carcinomate*'
(*Source*: Edinburgh University Matriculation Records)

Thomson noted that he was already in the second year of his studies attending James Gregory's lectures on the Practice of Medicine, and suggested that this indicated that

[1] The call-mark of the Thomson MSS is Gen. 1476; most of the Sharpey-Thomson correspondence is in Box 15.

[2] D. W. Taylor, 'The life and teaching of William Sharpey (1802–1880) "Father of Modern Physiology" in Britain', *Med. Hist.*, 1971, **15**: 126–53, 241–59. The other major published biographical source is Allen Thomson's obituary of Sharpey: *Proc. R. Soc. Lond.*, 1880, **31**: xi–xix.

[3] Allen Thomson, [Life of William Sharpey], Thomson MSS, op. cit., note 1 above, Box 16.

Sharpey had "received a considerable part of the rudiments of medical knowledge from his stepfather Dr Arrott".[4]

In addition to his University education, Sharpey attended a number of extra-mural courses, including those of John Barclay in anatomy and John Murray in chemistry. The correspondence reveals that Sharpey also attended lectures by John Thomson (letter 11): according to the list of Sharpey's class tickets Thomson compiled, Sharpey twice attended John Thomson's lectures on military surgery as well as those he gave on diseases of the eye, and the lectures Thomson gave at the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh until 1821.[5] In a testimonial John Thomson wrote for Sharpey in 1836, he stated that "I have been intimately acquainted with Dr Sharpey since 1818 when he first commenced his medical studies."[6]

In the spring of 1821 Sharpey obtained the Diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. He then proceeded to London to spend three months studying anatomy at Brooke's School in Windmill Street. Towards the end of 1821 Sharpey went to Paris where he "was closely engaged in the study of Clin. Med. & Surg. at the hospitals".[7]

He then returned to Arbroath where he seems to have been engaged to some degree in the family practice. In answer to a query on this point from Thomson, Sharpey's stepbrother declared in 1880 that "Sharpey was never in medical practice in Arbroath—He may occasionally have taken an interest in any particular patient who came to consult my father but that was all."[8] Thomson appears, however, to have discounted this testimony; there is a hint that James Arrott had reasons of his own to wish to minimize Sharpey's role in the Arbroath practice. Arrott did reveal that "[i]n the beginning of the year 1826 Sharpey had occasion to consider carefully the question of engaging in private practice and resolved not to do so."[9] This "occasion" arose when a local practitioner offered to sell Sharpey his practice. Sharpey declined, according to his nephew, because of a reluctance to enter into competition with "the progeny of old Dr Arrott".[10] Another reason for this decision was, in Thomson's view, a wish "to devote himself to Anatomical and physiological pursuits".[11]

With this end in mind, Sharpey travelled to the Continent in 1827. He initially went to Italy, spending some time in the study of anatomy with Bartolomeo Panizza (1785–1867) in Pavia. In the autumn of 1828 he proceeded to Berlin where he worked under the tutelage of Karl Asmund Rudolphi (1771–1832).[12] Sharpey's own account shows that he spent his time in Berlin engaged in intensive dissection, which he regarded as an essential preparation for the training of an anatomist.

[4] Ibid., p. 2.
[5] 'Dr Sharpeys Edin. Univ. Tickets', Thomson MSS, op. cit., note 1 above, Box 16.
[6] A transcription of Sharpey's testimonials is to be found in the Sharpey-Schäfer Collection, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, B. 1–4, ESS/B. 1/5–7.
[7] Thomson, [Life], op. cit., note 3 above, p. 3.
[8] James Arrott to Allen Thomson, 11 May 1880, Thomson MSS, op. cit., note 1 above, Box 16.
[9] James Arrott to Allen Thomson, 11 June 1880, ibid.
[10] William Henry Colvill to Allen Thomson, 3 October 1880, ibid.
[11] Thomson, [Life], op. cit., note 3 above, p. 4.
[12] Ibid., pp. 4–5.

Upon his return to Edinburgh he embarked upon microscopical research. Even as a student Sharpey had shown an interest in minute anatomy, making use of the microscope of the Royal Medical Society.[13] This instrument was, however, uncorrected for chromatic or spherical aberration. Sharpey was one of the first British workers to employ the new achromatic microscopes that became available around 1830.

At the same time he continued his preparations to begin teaching anatomy in the Edinburgh extra-mural school. He spent the summer of 1831 in Berlin collecting specimens and making preparations for this purpose.[14] When he offered his first course in the 1831–2 session it was in partnership with Allen Thomson. As mentioned above, Sharpey had been acquainted with Thomson's father since 1818, when Allen was nine years old. Sharpey was also a student contemporary of John Thomson's other son William, with whom he attended some University classes. It is therefore likely that Sharpey and Allen knew each other from an early date. Thomson had spent the year 1828–9 in Paris. He reported that when he returned to Edinburgh in July 1829, he "found Dr. S. in lodgings in Castle S^{t} and we then became very intimate and constantly together—in observations &c." It must have been during this period that they decided to enter into a partnership, and Thomson accompanied Sharpey to Germany in 1831 to help in the collection of preparations.[15]

Such partnerships were by no means unusual in the early nineteenth-century Edinburgh extra-mural school: it was common for teachers to join together to offer complementary courses in, for example, surgery and anatomy. Sharpey and Thomson's division of labour was, however, somewhat novel; the former taught anatomy and the latter physiology. John Allen (1771–1843)—after whom Allen Thomson was named—had in 1794 delivered a course of lectures on physiology in Edinburgh;[16] and in 1813 John Gordon—another intimate of the Thomson family—divided his teaching into separate courses of anatomy and physiology.[17] These precedents were not, however, influential; and Sharpey and Thomson's school was unique among contemporary extra-mural teaching establishments. Their lectures were held at 9 Surgeons Square where John and William Thomson, Gordon, and others had also taught.[18] This association persisted for the next four years.

In the summer of 1836 Sharpey became Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at what was then called the University of London, and later became University College. It was at this point that the correspondence began. Sharpey remained in this post until 1874. The correspondence reveals, however, that from the first he had in mind the possibility of returning to Edinburgh as Professor of Anatomy when the opportunity arose (letters 1 and 20). This very nearly came to pass in 1846 (letters

[13] Ibid., p. 3.
[14] Ibid., p. 7.
[15] Allen Thomson, [Chronology of William Sharpey's life], Thomson MSS, op. cit., note 3 above, Box 16.
[16] See [William Thomson], 'Biographical notice', in John Thomson, *An account of the life, lectures, and writings of William Cullen, M.D.*, 2 vols., Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1859, vol. 1, p. 13.
[17] These innovations are described in C. Lawrence, 'Alexander Monro *Primus* and the Edinburgh manner of anatomy', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, 1988, **62**: 193–214, on p. 213.
[18] Thomson, [Life], op. cit., note 3 above, p. 7.

25–26). Five years later Sharpey again actively considered returning to Edinburgh to fill the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine (letter 47).

During his time in London Sharpey was active in a number of scientific and educational bodies. He was a Secretary of the Royal Society from 1853 to 1872; in this capacity he played an important role in the refereeing of papers submitted for publication in the Royal Society's *Proceedings*.[19] He was also an early appointee to the General Council of Medical Education and Registration established by the Medical Act of 1858. Allen Thomson joined this body in 1859, and several letters are concerned with GMC business (letters 74, 82, 85, 87).

Sharpey's health began to fail in 1871, and in the succeeding years he gradually resigned his teaching and other responsibilities. His final years were blighted by failing eyesight, which was only partially relieved by surgery. He died on 11 April 1880 from bronchitis. Thomson was among those who attended him in his last hours.

All Allen Thomson's biographers agree upon the importance of the circumstances of his upbringing to his future career.[20] He was the younger son of John Thomson, one of the most dynamic figures in the medical life of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Edinburgh: he was Professor of Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, as well as successively holding the Regius Chairs of Military Surgery and Pathology in the University.[21] Allen's elder brother William was also a notable medical teacher.

Thomson had a conventional education, proceeding to the University after study at the Edinburgh High School. The courses he took are listed below.

1824–5: Chemistry, Humanities II
1825–6: Anatomy, Chemistry
1826–7: Chemistry, Botany
1827–8: Materia Medica, Institutes of Medicine
1829–30: Practice of Medicine, Midwifery, Clinical Medicine
1830: M.D. '*De evolutione cordis in animalibus vertebratis*'
(*Source*: Edinburgh University Matriculation Records)

Like Sharpey, Thomson supplemented these courses by attendance at the extra-mural school and Continental travel. The notes he took of his medical studies in Paris in 1828 and 1829 are preserved among the Thomson papers.[22] As a student in Edinburgh Thomson enjoyed the distinction of being President of the Royal Medical Society.

It was, according to Aitken, John Thomson's "great desire that [Allen] should become a teacher of anatomy, and devote himself to anatomical and physiological

[19] See Taylor, op. cit., note 2 above, pp. 241–3.
[20] The chief source on Allen Thomson's life is the obituary by W. Aitken in *Proc. R. Soc. Lond.*, 1887, **42**: xi–xxviii.
[21] On John Thomson see: [William Thomson], op. cit., note 16 above.
[22] I have discussed some of these notes in '*Au lit des malades*: A. F. Chomel's clinic at the Charité, 1828–9', *Med. Hist.*, 1989, **33**: 420–49.

pursuits".[23] From an early stage in his career Thomson himself favoured theoretical rather than practical medicine. He was particularly drawn to embryology, the subject of his MD dissertation. He was—again like Sharpey—a pioneer microscopist and among the first to teach the use of the microscope to students in Edinburgh.[24]

In 1836 Thomson ended his partnership with Sharpey and temporarily gave up teaching because of ill health. He moved to London to become private physician to John Russell, sixth Duke of Bedford; it was from this situation that he sent the first letter in the correspondence. Thomson toured the Continent with the Bedford family and lived with them in the Scottish Highlands and in Ireland for a number of years; however, it is clear from the correspondence that his intention was ever to resume his teaching career in Edinburgh. This he did in the 1837–8 session, this time offering a course of lectures in anatomy.

In 1839 Thomson was appointed Professor of Anatomy at the Marischal College, Aberdeen; but the appointment was short-lived. In 1841 he returned to Edinburgh as an extra-mural lecturer in anatomy. Aitken suggested that Thomson resigned his post in Aberdeen and returned to Edinburgh in the anticipation that the Institutes Chair in Edinburgh was soon to fall vacant.[25] There is nothing in the letters between Sharpey and Thomson of this period to confirm this conjecture. The letters do, however, suggest another motive for Thomson's departure from Aberdeen: his classes there were disappointingly small (letter 17). Nevertheless, Thomson was appointed Professor of the Institutes in 1842 following William Pulteney Alison's resignation. But it is clear from the letters that from an early date Thomson's ultimate goal lay elsewhere.

According to Aitken, Thomson was in 1833 introduced by Lady Holland to Lord Melbourne as "the future Professor of Anatomy in the University of Glasgow".[26] Thomson, had, on his mother's side, strong links with Glasgow University, and his father seems also to have encouraged him to look in that direction. In 1839 Sharpey alerted Thomson to the possible vacancy of the Glasgow Anatomy Chair (letter 16). Thomson's designs on this position were until 1848 thwarted by the inconsiderate longevity of the incumbent. It is unclear why Thomson would have preferred the Glasgow Chair to his situation in Edinburgh: Sharpey hinted as much when he advised Thomson in January 1848 to let "Lord John [Russell] know in some way or other that your views are directed towards the Glasgow Chair—He may not know the respective advantages of the position as compared with your present place—which he may very naturally suppose better" (letter 38). The Glasgow school of medicine in the early nineteenth century was in a decrepit condition, and the condition of the anatomy department was among the worst. There is a tantalizing reference in one letter to a list of "reasons" for preferring Glasgow that Thomson had sent Sharpey, but no more (letter 35). It can only be assumed that Thomson saw the Glasgow Chair as having great potential and as a more lucrative prospect than his present position. In 1849 Philip Kelland (1808–79), who held the Chair of

[23] Aitken, op. cit., note 20 above, p. xiii.
[24] Ibid., p. xx.
[25] Ibid., pp. xx–xxi.
[26] Ibid., p. xvi.

Mathematics in Edinburgh, wrote to ask of Thomson's "welfare (I had nearly said prosperity, but that would have come ill from a *poor* Edinburgh Professor to a *rich* Glasgow one)".[27]

Glasgow was to prove Thomson's ultimate professional destination. He held the Chair there for 29 years and (unlike Sharpey) seems not to have been tempted by other openings. During his time in Glasgow, Thomson made a major contribution to the revival of the medical school, greatly increasing the size of the anatomy class.[28] By 1861 the income of the Anatomy Chair was around £750.[29] In addition to his work in his own department, Thomson sought to secure the best appointments to other medical chairs in the University in the face of determined local opposition. These efforts are well-documented in the letters and are discussed more fully below. He was also active in the University's physical renovation: as Chairman of the Buildings Committee, Thomson supervised the transfer of the University to new premises at Gilmorehill between 1863 and 1870.

Upon his retirement in 1877, Thomson came to live with his son in London. There he died seven years later.

There are a number of clear parallels between the careers of Sharpey and Thomson. They were progenitors of a species of medical man that—although well-established in both France and Germany by the third decade of the nineteenth century—was late in developing in Britain. Both were medical academics who for almost their entire careers derived their incomes from teaching and not from practice. In this they differed from previous generations of Scottish medical teachers, and from most of their contemporaries, for whom teaching merely supplemented the practice of medicine. They were not, however, only teachers; they also made original contributions to medical science in the forms of histology and embryology, although this aspect of their activities became less prominent in their later years. In short, their careers reflected the research as well as the teaching role of the medical academic.

A commitment to the development and transmission of medical knowledge went hand-in-hand with a leading role in medical politics. Indeed, the latter activity was seen as vital to the success of the professional and intellectual ideals for which they strived.

Their letters reflect all these preoccupations. They are rich in detail concerning the practicalities of medical teaching, the state of histology, and the politics of professorial appointment in the mid-nineteenth century.

MOUNTING A CAMPAIGN

For almost their entire careers, teaching was Sharpey and Thomson's trade. The correspondence consequently contains much information on the organization and conduct of a course of lectures on anatomy-physiology in nineteenth-century

[27] [Philip] Kelland to Allen Thomson, 30 January 1849, Thomson MSS, op. cit., note 1 above, Box 18.
[28] See J. Coutts, *A history of the University of Glasgow: from its foundation in 1451 to 1909*, Glasgow, James Maclehose, 1909, pp. 520–1.
[29] Ibid., p. 576.

Britain. The letters immediately following Sharpey's transfer to London are, in particular, much concerned with business of teaching. They yield numerous insights into the differences, as well as the similarities, the Edinburgh lecturer experienced in his new school.

The first point to stress is that teaching in both Edinburgh and London was, in this period, a business. As an extra-mural teacher Sharpey had been entirely dependent upon student fees for his income, and he and Thomson had had to compete for these fees with the numerous other lecturers in Edinburgh. Sharpey was relatively successful in this competition: in the five years he lectured in Edinburgh the number of students in his class increased four-fold, from 22 to 88. Thomson, in contrast, never secured more than 36 students.[30] In London too, although he was guaranteed a small stipend, his income was mostly derived from fees. Moreover, the competition in London, where numerous schools of medicine existed, was still more fierce. The size of Sharpey's class, and therefore his income, fluctuated violently; in 1838–9 it stood at 374, while in 1863–4 it fell to 91. Student numbers and the rivalry between medical schools is a persistent theme in the correspondence.

The early letters are concerned with the settling of accounts between Sharpey and Thomson following the dissolution of their partnership: indeed, the letter of 2 December 1836 contains an actual account of the expenses and income their school had incurred during the summer of 1835 (letter 7).

Among the assets of the school the chief were the museum and its collection of drawings. Aitken dwelt upon the amount of time Thomson spent, prior to setting up as a teacher, visiting existing museums in Britain and on the Continent to study the preparations they held. From the information derived from these travels he formulated "an extensive list of preparations 'to be made' for teaching purposes".[31] The pains Thomson took to complete this exercise reflect the importance of preparations in the teaching of anatomy and physiology during this period.

In the case of Edinburgh teachers, preparations helped to offset the shortage of cadavers available for dissection. Sharpey and Thomson worked within the framework established by the 1832 Anatomy Act, which had been introduced largely in response to the illegal procurement of bodies that had previously obtained in Edinburgh.[32] Although the Act in theory guaranteed anatomy teachers a regular supply of bodies, in practice difficulties of implementation ensured that supplies remained scarce in Edinburgh. In contrast, Sharpey enjoyed a superabundance of material in London and invited Thomson to use the resources of University College's hospital in preparing materials for his course (letter 12).

Edinburgh teachers had, however, since the eighteenth century made a virtue of the scarcity of dissection material and developed an effective pedagogic strategy based upon the use of drawings and preparations.[33] The Sharpey-Thomson

[30] 'Number of students in Dr Sharpeys Classes in Edinburgh', Thomson MSS, op. cit., note 1 above, Box 16.

[31] Aitken, op. cit., note 20 above, pp. xvi–xviii.

[32] On the background to the passage of the Anatomy Act see Ruth Richardson, *Death, dissection and the destitute*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

[33] Lawrence, op. cit., note 17 above, p. 195.

correspondence suggests that this tradition remained vital among Edinburgh teachers in the first half of the nineteenth century and that they carried it with them when they moved to other centres.

The museum of Sharpey and Thomson's school remained in Edinburgh when the former moved south. Sharpey made provision for its care until Thomson's return (letter 5). Thomson implicitly acknowledged the sacrifice Sharpey had made when he wrote, on 6 October 1836, "I hope that . . . leaving the preparations will not be inconvenient to you" (letter 6). Upon reviewing the resources available to him in London, Sharpey concluded that the museum at University College, although "showy" (and the work of an Edinburgh man), "is anything but a good working one" (letter 7). A great deal of labour was as a result needed to produce new preparations.

The making of anatomical preparations required great skill; indeed, the finest examples were works of art. Perhaps the most demanding aspect of the mystery was the injection of mercury and other liquids in order to display the distribution of vessels within a specimen. Sharpey delegated this task to a subordinate—possibly one of his demonstrators at the College—and described his efforts to inject the lymphatics at a wide variety of sites. This account suggests that, for its devotees, injection could cease to be merely a means and sometimes became an end in itself. The same passage provides an example of how an exotic specimen (in this case an ostrich) was pressed into service to demonstrate vividly a particular structure less evident in man (letter 7).

Once made, specimens had to be preserved and displayed to optimum effect. A number of letters deal with the liquids best suited to preservation and with the construction of glass cases (letters 18, 19, 21).

Sharpey and Thomson relied heavily upon pictures to illustrate their lectures. Some were reproduced from the standard anatomical works of the time and formed a permanent stock of teaching aids. Sharpey's letter to Thomson of 16 February 1839 concerns the division between them of such pictures (letter 14). Other illustrations were, however, more ephemeral, drawn on a slate or board to accompany a particular lecture: Sharpey employed the services of a "young man" for this purpose (letter 7). A statement of the expenses he incurred under this head has been preserved.[34]

It is clear that Sharpey had relied heavily during his Edinburgh years upon his partner's skills and judgement in the matter of illustrations. Allen Thomson was an exceptionally gifted draughtsman who supplied superb drawings to accompany his own and Sharpey's early publications. After moving to London Sharpey continued to seek Thomson's advice on the materials and methods best suited to producing oil paintings of such anatomical structures as the eye and ear (letters 7 and 8). Sharpey hinted at something of the function that illustrations played in the armamentarium of a teacher: they could serve "to illuminate a dry, at least a tedious part of your course" (letter 7).

[34] See 'Tuson's Account for drawing diagrams and painting', Sharpey-Schäfer Collection, op. cit., note 6 above, ESS/B. 2/19.

Although he deferred to Thomson on questions of illustration, in other aspects of the anatomist's art Sharpey was indubitably the master and Thomson the apprentice. During their partnership Sharpey had taught the anatomical portion of their joint course and Thomson the physiology; Thomson had, however, acted as Sharpey's demonstrator for a time.[35] When Thomson set up in Edinburgh as an independent anatomy lecturer he was obliged turn to Sharpey for guidance.

In May 1837 Sharpey suggested a plan for Thomson's projected course. He also give him the name of a former student who had taken such notes of Sharpey's Edinburgh lectures as might give Thomson further guidance (letter 10). This is an interesting example of the role played by student notes during this period in the perpetuation and dissemination of the unpublished lectures of a teacher. In the following April Sharpey offered Thomson access to the copious supply of human cadavers available to the London teacher to gather teaching materials (letter 12). At a later date the correspondence records Sharpey's dispatch of further specimens required by Thomson (letter 14).

On 24 November 1838, shortly after Thomson began teaching, Sharpey wrote again to congratulate him on attracting more than 20 students. He also took the opportunity to convey some friendly criticism of Thomson's teaching style gleaned from a former student and to give advice on the proper management of dissections. Much of the letter is, however, devoted to one of the perennial technical problems confronting anatomy teachers: the preservation of cadavers. Sharpey had been experimenting with new injections in London and he passed on his results in the form of a recipe (letter 13).

All of the pedagogic techniques so far discussed would have been perfectly familiar to an eighteenth-century anatomy lecturer. In one respect, however, both Sharpey and Thomson were held to be innovators: this was in their use of the microscope as a teaching tool.[36] Both had learned this method during their visits to German medical schools and employed it on their return to Edinburgh; it is likely that the possession of such a novel mode of instruction gave them some advantage in the incessant competition for students between the rival teachers there. Certainly, the Committee which considered Sharpey's application for the London chair held him to have "a great advantage as a teacher in having studied the methods of instruction in the best continental schools".[37]

Thomson claimed that Sharpey's use of a microscope mounted upon a revolving table was "the first attempt made in London to illustrate physiological lectures microscopically".[38] There is some discussion in the letters about the construction of microscopes best adapted to this purpose; Sharpey recommended one design as answering "very well for *exhibition* as intended, for you can by giving the tube a

[35] Thomson, [Life], op. cit., note 3 above, p. 7.

[36] But note Monro's listing of microscopes in his teaching impedimenta: Lawrence, op. cit., note 17 above, p. 199.

[37] 'Report of Committee of the Senate appointed to examine the application and testimonials of candidates for the Professorship of Anatomy and Physiology', University College London [UCL] MSS, AM 1–5 (3), p. 18.

[38] Thomson, op. cit., note 2 above, p. xiv.

screwing motion within the other find the focus with tolerable ease and once found it is not liable to be deranged by the inspector". He went on to say, however, that "It will not be so well adapted to recommend to students as a *working microscope*", which suggests that both he and Thomson were encouraging their students to undertake private microscopic study as early as 1842 (letter 21).

The teaching methods so far described were almost all as applicable to the physiology course Sharpey gave in London as to the anatomy courses he and Thomson had delivered in Edinburgh. The one exception was dissection: at University College descriptive anatomy was taught by another professor and dissections were conducted by demonstrators. This mutuality of techniques is indicative of the considerable overlap between anatomy and physiology that persisted in early nineteenth-century Britain. In France and Germany, physiology had gone far in emancipating itself from its roots in anatomy and acquired an autonomous intellectual and institutional identity, but in Britain this separation was much slower in coming.[39] Physiology's development as a discipline has also been supposed to have been inhibited by the strength of anti-vivisection sentiment in Britain.

The Sharpey-Thomson correspondence offers some support for these claims. Shortly after his arrival in London, Sharpey advised Thomson that his projected course would be "one of physical and physiological Anatomy—to compound small things with great on the plan of the Elementa of Haller" (letter 7). It encompassed general, including microscopical, anatomy, and sought to display the connections between structure and function. His teaching was, in short, in the tradition of *anatomia animata*.

So ambiguous was the identity of Sharpey's subject that some of his students when entering on further study at other universities claimed attendance on his course as a qualification in physiology, and others in anatomy. The Dean of Medicine in Edinburgh was obliged in 1838 to write to the authorities at University College seeking clarification.[40]

Taylor has, moreover, found evidence that Sharpey shared the revulsion of many of his countrymen to the experiments on animals conducted by François Magendie—the archetypal vivisectionist—some of which he had witnessed during his visit to Paris.[41] However, he has also pointed out that this does not indicate a total rejection of vivisection: Sharpey merely objected to the poor design of Magendie's experiments and the *unnecessary* suffering they caused. Moreover, Sharpey conducted experiments on animals both for his own benefit, and for his class.[42]

Sharpey's first letter (2) in the collection contains an account of a vivisection he performed in Edinburgh in conjunction with a number of colleagues, including

[39] See G. L. Geison, 'Social and institutional factors in the stagnancy of English physiology, 1840–1870', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, 1972, **46**: 30–58.

[40] Thomas Stewart Traill to the Secretary of University College London, 11 November 1838, UCL MSS, College Correspondence, 1838 Oct./Nov., 4376–4399 (4394).

[41] Taylor, op. cit., note 2 above, pp. 151–2, 255.

[42] Ibid., pp. 140–4.

Robert Christison. Other letters show Sharpey practising electro-physiology and experimental toxicology (letter 9, 33, 59). The correspondence also confirms Sharpey's use of experiment as a teaching technique: in December 1837 he informed Thomson, "I have continued to show a few experiments (more on *dead* than on *living* animals however)" (letter 11). Such use of experimental demonstrations in lectures represented, moreover, no departure from the pedagogic tradition in which Sharpey had been trained: in the eighteenth century the Monros had made regular use of experiments in their teaching.[43]

If there were no intellectual or ethical obstacles to Sharpey's use of live animals in his teaching, he did face certain practical hindrances. In particular, the *supply* of experimental subjects proved a problem in London. In December 1836 he lamented, "I can get nothing on a few hours notice, and the distance to the rabbit market, the slaughter house &c. are very distressing—I think I must send to Edinburgh for frogs" (letter 7). Although his new base was better provided with materials for human anatomy, Edinburgh was evidently a more convenient place for the experimental physiologist. Twenty-one years later these problems had still not been solved; and Sharpey proposed to overcome them by breeding his own rabbits and frogs (letter 60).

It would therefore be a mistake to view Sharpey's teaching merely as a species of animated anatomy. Although the course undoubtedly leaned towards a morphological approach to questions of function, this was partially offset by his awareness of the importance of experimental work. There is no question that Sharpey was fully conversant with both the results and with the methods of contemporary Continental physiologists and sought to acquaint his students with these researches.

In one department, however, he freely admitted his own shortcomings. In 1851 he concluded a discussion of recent work on the physiology of digestion by declaring: "I wish I knew more of chemistry!" (letter 47). In the following year he attempted to remedy this lack by enrolling as a student of practical chemistry at the Birkbeck Laboratory (letter 49). It should be noted that his professed lack of chemical understanding did not prevent Sharpey from expounding and demonstrating to his students Claude Bernard's recently-published researches on the glycogenic function of the liver (letter 47).

Despite his interest in the latest trends in experimental physiology, Sharpey had no claims to be an original worker in this field. Similarly Thomson was always more a morphologist than a student of function. One subject area in which they could, however, claim the status of original researchers was in the field of microscopic anatomy.

HISTOLOGY

Sharpey and Thomson's precocious use of the new achromatic microscope has already been noted. They formed part of a group of Edinburgh workers, which also included John Goodsir, Martin Barry, and John Hughes Bennett, who were active

[43] Lawrence, op. cit., note 17 above, especially pp. 206–8.

microscopic researchers in the years immediately preceding and following the promulgation of the cell theory in 1838. Sharpey himself disliked the term "histology", which came into general usage in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, preferring to describe these endeavours as "microscopical anatomy" (letter 75).

The correspondence provides a number of insights into how Sharpey and Thomson viewed other members of this small group of histological pioneers. In May 1845 Sharpey discussed a collection of Goodsir's papers he had received. He doubted the wisdom of reprinting some of these researches, maintaining that "the paper on centres of nutrition was well as a passing contribution, but scarcely deserves its present place." This comment shows how widely contemporary and retrospective judgements can diverge: Goodsir's paper on 'Centres of nutrition' is now considered to be his most significant contribution, foreshadowing some aspects of Virchow's later work. Sharpey's remarks also illuminate his own attitude to science: he chided Goodsir for being "too anxious to gain a reputation as a generalizer in science . . . the great aim no doubt of all science but not to be done rashly" (letter 22). Contemporaries sometimes faulted both Sharpey and Thomson for their reluctance to attempt syntheses of the particular observations they had made. However, Sharpey's aversion to premature generalization had its roots less in naïve empiricism than in a venerable Scottish methodological tradition, which he would have imbibed in his early university days.[44]

His strictures about particular papers notwithstanding, Sharpey was in no doubt that Goodsir was "an excellent observer and sound headed man". His opinion of the work of Martin Barry, another Edinburgh man who removed to London, was altogether more harsh. In a long letter written in October 1845 Sharpey launched a devastating attack upon the validity of Barry's observations and upon his scientific integrity. These remarks were occasioned when Thomson asked for Sharpey's opinion about Barry's claim that muscle fibres were composed of a "double spiral" of filaments. Although controversial, this theory had received the support of others, including the influential Richard Owen.[45] Barry had even persuaded Sharpey himself of the truth of his doctrine. However, upon repeating these observations at his leisure, Sharpey became convinced that Barry's doctrine was the result merely of an optical illusion (letter 24).

Sharpey went on to cast doubts upon other aspects of Barry's work, and, in particular, his claim that the blood corpuscles were capable of spontaneous movement. Sharpey proved to his own satisfaction that the motion Barry had observed was the result of the action of cilia. Although he couched it purely in terms of a contrast between accurate and erroneous observations, important theoretical considerations were implicated in this issue. The spontaneous motion of blood corpuscles could be adduced as evidence for the existence of a special "vital force": indeed, W. B. Carpenter drew just this inference. Sharpey, on the other hand, was

[44] See G. N. Cantor, 'Henry Brougham and the Scottish methodological tradition', *Stud. Hist. Philos. Sci.*, 1971, 69–89.

[45] See R. Owen, *The life of Richard Owen: by his grandson the Rev. Richard Owen, M.A.*, 2 vols., London, John Murray, 1894, vol. 1, p. 200.

opposed to any such doctrine: as early as 1831, he invoked ciliary motion to disprove similar claims made by another researcher.[46]

More generally, Sharpey's remarks supply insights into the nature of contemporary conflicts over the interpretation of microscopic observations. These early histologists were confronted with the formidable task of *conceptualizing* what was, in effect, a new world. Precisely because they were pioneers, they could rely upon no established interpretative framework.[47] Under these circumstances disagreement was inevitable. Each researcher brought particular preconceptions and sensitivities to his investigations. Sharpey was "startled" by Barry's evident failure to see the phenomena of ciliary motion which was so obvious to him; but *his* eye had been sensitized by long years of searching for such cilia, whereas Barry was looking for something quite different.

Such conceptual conflicts could only be overcome when a *social* consensus was established within the community of microscopic observers. Sharpey's letter exemplifies attempts to exert social control of this kind upon Barry. In both instances of disagreement Sharpey repeated Barry's observations in his presence and in the company of other microscopists. In the latter case Barry appeared to succumb to this pressure: "in the end he turns to Marshall and says, that if he was to be corrected he was very happy to be put right by Dr Sharpey." What provoked Sharpey's particular wrath and contempt was Barry's subsequent profession of the same opinions despite his ostensible submission to the judgement of his peers. His case provided "a fearful spectacle of morbid craving for scientific distinction" (letter 24). Barry's offence was, therefore, as much against the *morality* as the technical standards of science.

Some of the disagreements between histologists of the 1840s may be ascribed to the fact that they for the most part employed fresh, untreated tissue without the use of the staining agents and fixative techniques that later became available. A letter (77) of 1865 reveals, however, that the interpretation of treated specimens could be equally problematic. It also suggests that as a Secretary of the Royal Society with responsibility for the refereeing of histological papers, Sharpey played a major role in adjudicating such questions.

MEDICAL CHAIRS

The final notable theme of these letters is the politics of professorial appointment in nineteenth-century Britain. During the course of the correspondence Sharpey and Thomson were involved in several such contests, sometimes as mere spectators, but more often as active partisans.

The first of these episodes was the prelude to Sharpey's own appointment in 1836 to the Chair of Anatomy and Physiology at the University of London. This appointment has been considered by Mazumdar in the context of the wider goals of the University's founders. She has seen Sharpey's success as reflecting the bias of the

[46] See Taylor, op. cit., note 2 above, p. 146.

[47] I have discussed this point more fully in 'John Goodsir and the making of cellular reality', *J. Hist. Biol.*, 1983, **16**: 75–99.

dominant group on the College Council towards Edinburgh-trained men and against the products of the London anatomy schools.[48]

The correspondence adds a few additional details to existing knowledge about Sharpey's appointment. It shows that Robert Carswell, a long-time acquaintance of the Thomson family, furthered Sharpey's cause (letter 1). Carswell is the probable addressee of the testimonial for Sharpey that Thomson composed; parts of this document were embodied in the report that the appointments committee eventually produced (letter 3). Richard Quain's role in going to Edinburgh to hear Sharpey lecture is recorded in other documents;[49] the letter of 18 July 1836 makes it possible, however, to place an approximate date on this visit. It reveals too, that Quain heard a lecture by another contender, Alexander Lizars, which suggests that the selection committee had not yet made up its mind between these two candidates.

The same letter shows Sharpey, in conjunction with the Thomsons, utilizing the strong links between Edinburgh and the London University to advance his claims. But there is also evidence of hostility among some members of the College Council to his claims: Henry Warburton, in particular, appears to have opposed Sharpey's appointment (letter 2). Warburton and at least one other of the Council were for Richard Grainger, a local candidate.[50] Mazumdar's assumption that there was a bias towards Edinburgh men among the Council members must, therefore, be qualified.

Thomson's long-standing interest in the Glasgow Chair of Anatomy has already been mentioned. When in March 1839 Sharpey erroneously alerted him to the possibility of a vacancy there, he also broached the subject of how best to secure Thomson's appointment. In this letter, two themes that attain great prominence later in the correspondence emerge. The first is the connection between academic and national politics. Because the Glasgow post was a Regius Chair it lay in the gift of the Crown. Sharpey therefore advised Thomson to use James Clark, Physician-in-Ordinary to the Queen, as a referee if required to do so by Lord John Russell, the Home Secretary (letter 16). His family's close links since the late eighteenth century with Whig politicians, and the Russell family in particular, were to stand Thomson in good stead in such attempts to secure patronage.

But long before James Jeffray made it possible for these manoeuvres to come to fruition, another opportunity opened up for Thomson. In June 1842 Sharpey advised him that W. P. Alison, Professor of the Institutes of Medicine, was (in the time-honoured manner) likely to transfer to the Edinburgh Chair of the Practice of Medicine, thus creating a vacancy in the medical faculty. In this case, patronage was in local hands, for appointments to most Edinburgh University chairs were still vested in the Town Council. The fierce contest that preceded J. Y. Simpson's appointment to the Midwifery Chair in 1839 reveals the scope for factional conflict

[48] P. M. H. Mazumdar, 'Anatomical physiology and the reform of medical education, 1825–35', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, 1983, **57**: 230–46, especially pp. 242–4.

[49] See Taylor, op. cit., note 2 above, p. 137.

[50] When the Council came to make its appointment, Warburton read out two letters in support of Grainger's candidacy. See University College Records, Session of Council, Thursday 11 August 1836.

that professorial contests in Edinburgh could provoke.[51] Hence Sharpey's warning to Thomson against being "taken up . . . by a particular party". In the event, Thomson's appointment to the Institutes Chair was apparently uncontentious; all that was required was the enlistment of an impressive group of referees (letter 20).

Once installed in the Edinburgh medical faculty, Thomson was ideally placed to facilitate Sharpey's return to Edinburgh in 1846 as Professor of Anatomy. He alerted him to the imminent vacancy in December 1845. In his reply Sharpey, after reviewing the pros and cons, indicated his willingness to return to Edinburgh if Thomson could guarantee an uncontested election; once again he revealed his dislike for and fear of the potential acrimony that the contest for an Edinburgh chair could generate. With the aid of James Syme and, perhaps, J. Y. Simpson, Thomson seems to have had no trouble in meeting this requirement; and only the blandishments of Sharpey's London colleagues ultimately thwarted the appointment.

In Glasgow a more diverse range of interests bore upon professorial appointments. This was the result both of the greater number of Regius Chairs and the different relationship between the University and the local and national polity. When in 1847 the Glasgow Anatomy Chair finally became vacant, Sharpey briefed Thomson on his likely rivals and the patronage they might enjoy. The Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and the Lord Advocate emerge as the most important players; but the possibility of the intervention of the Glasgow MPs is also mentioned. The same dramatis personae were to figure in subsequent Glasgow contests. The Lord Advocate's role deserves special notice. After 1765 this officer had developed into a veritable minister for Scotland with formidable executive powers. The Lord Advocate also acted as a patronage broker for the government north of the border; appointments to Regius Chairs formed part of this political function.[52] Sharpey had no doubts that, with his political connections, Thomson was assured of success; it was nonetheless essential to avoid complacency and to ensure that "there is no failure through mismanagement" (letter 35).

In order to realize Thomson's potential support, it was necessary to communicate his claims to those in power. This appears to have been no straightforward process. Even for a member of the Thomson family, direct access to someone like Lord John Russell appears to have been difficult: it was necessary to employ some intercessor. In January 1848 *Lady* John was mentioned as someone who might perform this role (letter 38). She appears to have been on familiar terms with Thomson, consulting him in 1849 over the choice of a tutor for her son (letter 44). A more important intermediary, however, was a politician's "medical confessor": that is, the practitioner who attended on him, and who might have some call upon his attention. In particular, royal physicians and surgeons, such as James Clark and Benjamin Brodie, seem to have enjoyed privileged access to the mighty (letter 39).

Such metropolitan influence needed to be complemented with political support within Scotland; and here the role of the Lord Advocate was crucial. When his

[51] See J. Duns, *Memoir of Sir James Y. Simpson, Bart.*, Edinburgh, Edmondston and Douglas, 1873, pp. 98–103.

[52] See A. Murdoch, *The people above: politics and administration in mid-eighteenth century Scotland*, Edinburgh, John Donald, 1980, especially pp. 13–14.

appointment to the Glasgow chair was assured, Thomson wrote a fulsome letter of thanks to Andrew Rutherfurd, the Lord Advocate. He took care to invoke the memory of John Thomson, who had moved in the same Edinburgh Whig circles as Rutherfurd, maintaining that "nothing concerning me could have given greater satisfaction to my father than my receiving this appointment, to which he from an early period encouraged me to look forward."[53] William Thomson gave further proof of his family's gratitude by supporting Rutherfurd's candidacy as Rector of Glasgow University later in 1848.[54] Patronage had its price.

The professoriate of Glasgow University formed a notoriously conservative, self-perpetuating clique. Despite his Millar blood, Thomson was to some degree viewed as an intruder: he wrote, perhaps facetiously, in 1852 that some of his medical colleagues had threatened to resign upon his appointment (letter 48). Thomson saw his role in the University as that of a reformer implacably opposed to the—in his eyes—corrupt mode of filling chairs that had hitherto prevailed.

His first challenge came in 1852 when the question of a successor to Thomas Thomson (no relation) in the Chair of Chemistry arose. The latter had attempted to ensure that his chair remained in the family by employing his nephew as an assistant lecturer for some years prior to his death; such nepotism was not uncommon in Scottish universities. Upon the old man's death, the medical faculty drew up a testimonial in favour of the nephew in order to forestall the appointment of an outsider. There were precedents for this strategem in earlier efforts by the medical faculty to secure a chair for an inside candidate by presenting a common front to the Crown.[55] Thomson, however, refused to participate in this exercise, seeing it as a manifestation of the wretched parochialism and "Edinophobia" of the Glasgow professoriate. Wider political interests were, however, also involved. Thomson noted that the emergence of a Conservative government had brought with it an attempt to revert to "the old tory way of making appointments through the Duke of Montrose" in the University.[56]

Thomson's response was to turn to Sharpey to find some outside contender to resist the claims of the internal candidate. In particular, he hoped that Thomas Graham, the Professor of Chemistry at University College, might be induced to offer himself for the Glasgow Chair (letter 48). This was a shrewd choice since Graham was not only a respected chemist, but also originally a Glasgow man. Sharpey's reply was, however, discouraging, pointing out that Graham's situation in London was too comfortable for him to contemplate a move. He did mention a number of other candidates who might be suitable, including the Edinburgh lecturer Thomas Anderson who finally succeeded to the Chair. In this letter Sharpey revealed the

[53] Allen Thomson to Andrew, Lord Rutherfurd, 9 February 1848, National Library of Scotland [NLS] MS 9714 ff. 178–9. On Rutherfurd see G. W. T. Omond, *The Lord Advocates of Scotland: second series 1834–1880*, London, Andrew Melrose, 1914, pp. 47–125.

[54] William Thomson to Andrew, Lord Rutherfurd, 14 November 1848, NLS MS 9714 ff. 300–301.

[55] Coutts, op. cit., note 28, above, pp. 499–500.

[56] On the role of the Duke of Montrose in Glasgow University patronage see A. Duncan, *Memorials of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow 1599–1850: with a sketch of the rise of the Glasgow Medical School and of the medical profession in the west of Scotland*, Glasgow, James Maclehose, 1896, p. 174.

importance of "friendship" in influencing the support a candidate might secure (letter 49). "Friendship" in this sense referred to the complex web of personal relations and obligations in which potential patrons were enmeshed. An individual's attitudes and loyalties might be as much influenced by such commitments and loyalties as by party or institutional ties.

This episode adumbrated many of the features of the far fiercer contest in 1859–60 for the Glasgow Chair of Surgery. There was the same interaction between metropolitan and local influences, and between the micro- and macro-political. In this case, however, the Glasgow Members of Parliament, who figured only slightly in 1852, loomed large. The role played by MPs as a channel of communication between important interests in their constitutencies and the London government has been described by Bourne in his recent study of nineteenth-century patronage.[57] Yet the Members were subject to a variety of sometimes contradictory demands; loyalty to party often mattered less than the need to appease local factions and the demands of "friendship".[58]

The correspondence makes it clear that appointments to Regius Chairs were subject to similar pressures. Thomson in November 1859 declared it to be "a great grievance that the appointments to scientific chairs in the Universities should be influenced in the manner which it appears is being done by the Glasgow Members in the case of the Surgery Chair." The MPs in question, Walter Buchanan and Robert Dalglish, prided themselves on being "sapient radicals", but they had "taken up the cause of the Candidate of the greatest & most unscrupulous Tory connection in Glasgow on the grounds of private friendship and the flimsy & absurd view that Surgeons of Glasgow growth should alone obtain places in its University 'Our own fish guts &c.'." The candidate in question, G. H. B. Macleod, had been sponsored by the incumbent of the Chair in much the same way as Thomas Thomson had taken up his nephew. Lawrie had persuaded Andrew Buchanan, a traditionalist member of the medical faculty, also to support Macleod; and Buchanan had, in turn, prevailed upon his brother Walter to use his influence in the cause. Dalglish had been recruited through another friendship network: he was a neighbour of Macleod's father, a prominent Glasgow clergyman (letter 63).

Macleod therefore had formidable backing among the tight-knit oligarchy that dominated Glasgow. These saw the appointment merely as a means of gratifying local interests and of reinforcing civic chauvinism. Against this, Thomson asserted that the appointment should be determined on the basis of merit, and, in particular, the scientific credentials of candidates. There are clear overtones here of the radical critique of the "Old Corruption" which had been current in British political discourse since the eighteenth century; but Thomson's ethos also mirrors that of nineteenth-century campaigns to fill posts in the public service on the grounds of candidates' educational and professional qualifications, rather than on the basis of

[57] J. M. Bourne, *Patronage and society in nineteenth-century England*, London, Edward Arnold, 1986, pp. 153–4.
[58] Ibid., pp. 137–8.

the "interest" they could command.[59] By this standard there was, he maintained, no question but that the post should go to Joseph Lister.

The irony was that Thomson could only hope to attain this goal by means of his own patronage network; it was to this end that he wrote to Sharpey on 27 November 1859 (letter 64). As in the case of his own appointment to Glasgow, Thomson could count upon the support of both the Home Secretary and the Lord Advocate. Such was the pressure from the Glasgow Members, however, that the former hesitated to appoint Lister (letter 65). Thomson sought to counteract such political pressure by appealing to the authority of senior metropolitan medical practitioners like Brodie and Clark. Implicit in his argument is the principle that only professional men were capable of making a judgement in these matters: "A Member of Parliament is not a better judge of the fitness of professors of surgery than other men." (letter 66).

Thomson pursued this strategy in the early weeks of 1860. He wrote on 16 January to Brodie who, as someone interested "in the advancement of scientific instruction in medicine", might intercede with the Home Secretary on Lister's behalf (letter 68).[60] Sharpey reported that Brodie was, however, reluctant to intervene and that the Home Secretary seemed about to succumb to local pressure (letter 69). Two days later Sharpey sent a still more pessimistic note complaining that the Home Secretary was about to make "the interests of the University and of Medical Education in Scotland subordinate to the gratification of a political supporter" (letter 70).

Sharpey had, however, misjudged the position. The very intensity of the politicking for Macleod appears to have acted against him. In particular, the Senate of Glasgow University felt its own authority threatened by the interest outside factions had taken in the Surgery Chair and protested to the Crown against this interference.[61] On 28 January 1860 Lister was appointed Professor of Surgery in Glasgow University.[62] There is a gap in the correspondence at this point so Sharpey and Thomson's reaction to this success is not known. The next letter in the sequence was written after Lister had begun to teach in Glasgow; it describes his success and the likely prospect that he would soon obtain a surgeoncy at the Royal Infirmary (letter 71). It was during his Glasgow period that Lister began his experiments in antiseptic surgery.

Although no subsequent event matched the intensity of the contest for the Glasgow Chair of Surgery, two sequels do figure in the correspondence. The first of these occurred in 1875 when the Physiology Chair in Glasgow became vacant; the second two years later when the question of Thomson's own successor arose (letters 93–96, 98–99). A number of familiar themes are reprised in these letters: in both cases the "best" (in Sharpey and Thomson's estimation) candidate had to contend against a rival with local influence. In the case of the Physiology Chair, influential

[59] Ibid., pp. 166–76.

[60] Lister had already applied directly to Brodie for support, at Sharpey's suggestion. See Joseph Lister to William Sharpey, 8 October [1859], Edinburgh University Library MSS, AAF; Lister to Sharpey, 13 October 1859, NLS MS 9814 f. 141.

[61] See Coutts, op. cit., note 28 above, p. 582.

[62] See R. B. Fisher, *Joseph Lister 1827–1912*, London, Macdonald and Jane's, 1977, pp. 96–7.

professional opinion was again mobilized to assure the success of the favoured candidate. The case of the Anatomy Chair was less easy to manage; it transpired that even the Queen's Physician could express an opinion only when asked to do so by the Home Secretary (letter 98). Nonetheless, the eventual outcome of this contest too was satisfactory to Sharpey and Thomson.

Sharpey and Thomson clearly saw themselves as in the intellectual vanguard of Victorian medicine. Their self-appointed mission was to ensure that merit, and specifically scientific merit, triumphed above all other considerations in competition for academic posts. They set themselves against all forms of nepotism and jobbery. Nor was this campaign confined exclusively to the Universities: in 1854 they intervened to ensure that the "best" man obtained an Assistant Physicianship at St Bartholomew's Hospital against "the son of one of the Old Physicians of the Establishment . . . [who] carries with him all the influence among the Governors which nepotism . . . can command" (letter 50). In this as in the other cases discussed, they insisted on the right of professional control over appointments against the claims of all lay interests.