

**A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW:
PREPARED IN CONNECTION WITH
THE CELEBRATION OF THE NINTH
JUBILEE IN JUNE 1901**

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UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS VIEW FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

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The University of Glasgow

THE fifteenth century was very prolific in giving birth to Universities in Europe, three Scottish and at least twenty Continental Universities having been founded during its course. It was a time of reading and meditation, if not of profound enquiry, preceding the great upheaval of the Reformation, a time when the Renaissance movement set scholars to recover from obscure corners the works of the great authors of the old classical ages, and to study them with enthusiastic relish. About the middle of the century the movement was aided by the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, resulting in the dispersion all over Europe of the scholars who had previously found a home there; and by the invention of printing, the greatest external aid ever furnished to human thought. The influences at work on the Continent, though they might not immediately affect Scotland, gradually came to be felt there also. Scotland itself was by this time struggling into intellectual life. Fordoun and Wyntoun had made a beginning on the history of the country; Barbour in the previous century had sung the deliverance of the nation and the achievements of the greatest of Scottish kings; after him the Scottish lyre had passed to the king himself, James I.; and before the close of the century the lays of the great minstrel Dunbar began to be heard. There had also arisen "the unlettered muse" of the earlier ballads and of Blind Harry's metrical narrative of Wallace.

A poet of the nineteenth century has described his native country as "Caledonia stern and wild," and perhaps the description would have been as appropriate in the middle of the fifteenth century; but it appears that even then most of the land available in Scotland was carefully cultivated, that the common people were not less prosperous than in continental countries, that industry had made considerable progress, and that there was an appreciable amount of foreign commerce, especially with the Netherlands. But the progress of the country was too often interrupted by outbreaks of unruly and rapacious nobles or by schemes of crafty and ambitious ecclesiastics, both sets of disturbers finding additional opportunity in the long and, unfortunately, too frequent minorities of the sovereign. James II., who, at the time the University was founded, had scarcely come of age, proved a ruler of good ability during his brief reign, though at the outset his career was stained by the slaying of Douglas under severe provocation, as Bruce's had been by the slaying of Comyn. James III. did not know how to conform to his environment or to make his environment conform to him, and his reign was distracted especially in the latter part, but the Wars of the Roses kept the English employed at home, and prevented their making serious mischief in Scotland. Afterwards the reign of James IV. —tolerably prudent for the most part, till it ended in the supreme imprudence of Flodden—was a time of notable progress. The condition of the country, therefore, for the first sixty years from the foundation of the University, though it cannot be described as a golden age, was not altogether unfavourable.

Two sets of motives combine to create a demand for Universities and to provide them with students, and these motives are not essentially different in the twentieth century from what they were in the fifteenth. There is the speculative interest in the search after truth, man's

native and indestructible inclination to the pursuit of enquiry and expression, giving birth to poetry, literature, philosophy, and art; and there is the utilitarian motive of qualifying for the higher offices and employments of public or private life. In the fifteenth century and long before it, the Scots wandered much abroad, and in 1326, the Bishop of Moray founded the Moray College in Paris for the youth of his own diocese, but it was soon opened to students from all parts of Scotland, and came to be known as the Scots College. In it many distinguished Scots have studied and taught. It was natural, however, that a desire should arise to have within their own country the means of giving and receiving the higher learning, and all the more so because warfare and other evils sometimes added to the natural risks of travelling, as when James I., when being sent to France for his education, was taken prisoner by the English in 1405. Accordingly a University was established at St. Andrews in 1411, and another at Glasgow forty years later.

The University of Glasgow was founded in 1451 by a Bull of Pope Nicholas V., obtained on the solicitation of James II. of Scotland, who in turn was prompted by William Turnbull, Bishop of Glasgow, an adviser and supporter of the King in his contest with the aspiring and mutinous house of Douglas. The Bull established in the city of Glasgow a *Studium Generale*, not only in Theology, Canon Law, and Civil Law, but also in Arts and in any other legitimate faculty; provided that students who had completed the appointed course of study in a particular faculty, and who had been duly examined and found worthy, might receive license to teach or be admitted to the degree of master or doctor, after which they should, without further examination or probation, be qualified to rule and teach not only in their own University but also in any other; ordained that the doctors, masters, readers, and students of the new institution should