

**EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY;
A SKETCH OF ITS LIFE
FOR 300 YEARS**

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Edinburgh University; A Sketch of Its Life for 300 Years by Various

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A Sketch of its Life for 300 Years.

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EDINBURGH:
JAMES GEMMELL, GEORGE IV. BRIDGE

1884.

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EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY:

A SKETCH OF ITS LIFE FOR 300 YEARS.

L. ROBERT BOLLOCK, Principal—1583-1599.

VERY soon after the Reformation the question of founding a College in Edinburgh began to engage the attention of the Town Council and city ministers. In this they probably had many motives. It was partly zeal for the spread of education, partly a natural wish to have their young men educated according to the new ways, in an institution over which they should have control, and by teachers in whom they should have confidence. It was manifestly, too, for the advantage of the youth of the city to have such a College at home, where they could get a high education without the inconvenience and expense of a residence at St Andrews, Glasgow, or Aberdeen.

The obstacles in the way of the founders were many and difficult to overcome. Queen Mary naturally did not look with favour on the proposed establishment of a Reformers' College; the Bishops, who were Chancellors of the existing Universities of St Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, used all their influence in Church and State against the new and rival scheme; while perhaps the greatest difficulty of all was the founders' lack of funds. To remedy this, they petitioned Queen Mary for grants from the confiscated church revenues and for a site, but without success. In 1563, however, we find them agreeing to pay £1000 Scots to John Pennycuik, Provost of the Collegiate Church of St Mary in the Fields, for the site and ruined

buildings of this once great religious house. This bargain does not seem to have been carried out, as two Provosts, Balfour and Gib, succeeded Pennycuick, and it was not till 1581 that, as Craufurd, the earliest historian of the College, tells us, "they purchased of John Gib and John Fenton their right to the Kirk o' Field, to be a place for the situation of the intended College."

This, the scene of Darnley's tragic fate, is the site of the present College, on the South Bridge. The house which was blown up on the night of 10th February 1567, was afterwards repaired and used as the dwelling of the Principal. Dalziel, writing in 1803, says it still existed. The Library now covers its site.

The triumph of the anti-Episcopal party in the Church in 1580, cleared the way for the foundation of the new College. The Town Council gained their point, with the zealous assistance of James Lawson, successor to Knox as chief minister of Edinburgh, and another city minister, Walter Balcanquhall, father of Heriot's executor, the Dean of Rochester. After buying out the King's creatures, they began in a humble way to prepare buildings for their new College. With the scanty funds at their command, it was necessary that they should utilize as far as possible existing structures on the ground. They accordingly began to enclose these within a wall, which included an irregular pile near the Kirk o' Field, which the Duke of Chatelherault had built on the site of an hospital that Somerset's Englishmen had burned down after Pinkie fight. This was the town house of the Duke until the forfeiture of the Hamiltons, when the Town Council bought it. It was afterwards the cause of much litigation, for the Hamiltons on their restoration laid claim to it, and the Council had to repurchase it in 1613, for £3000. This building occupied the site of the centre of the north side of the present quadrangle.

Meanwhile, as the patched up and motley pile of buildings was being prepared, the Council applied to King James VI. for

a Charter for their infant College. This document was signed by the King at Stirling, on the 14th of April 1582. Among its other provisions it conferred on the Council and city ministers the entire control of higher education in the city, and in this respect as well as in many others, the new Town's College differed from the three older foundations, each of which was an *imperium in imperio*, with valuable privileges and immunities from civil control.

In the middle of 1583 the College buildings were ready for occupation, and it became necessary for the Council to appoint an instructor for the expected students. On the recommendation of Mr James Lawson, they fixed on ROBERT ROLLOCK, a young man of good family, who was then a Regent of Philosophy at St Andrews, a ripe scholar, an excellent organiser, and a man held in the highest esteem for his pure personal character.

Rollock accepted the invitation of the Council, and began, in the lower hall of Hamilton House, the lectures of his first session, in October 1583, to a large class of students, who had been attracted to the infant College by his great reputation.

Very soon, however, he became sensible of a difficulty that has never ceased to be manifest to all his successors in Scottish Chairs,—the insufficient preliminary education of many of his students. Latin then was not only in itself an important branch of a liberal education, but was a part of the indispensable equipment of a student. It was the universal medium of communication among the learned, the language in which College Lectures were delivered, and which the students were required to use, not only in the class-room, but everywhere within the bounds of the College.

Rollock found many of his students very imperfectly acquainted with Latin, and accordingly, on his advice, the Town Council appointed DAVID NAIN to be second Regent, with the special duty of preparing the backward students in Latin, so that they might be found qualified for entrance to the regular course in the following session. The infant College thus started