

Institution Histories.

THE DUNDEE ROYAL INFIRMARY.

THE Dundee Royal Infirmary, says the *Dundee Advertiser*, cannot boast of the antiquity which is associated with some similar Institutions—St. Bartholomew's in London for instance, founded in 1123, or the Maison Dieu of Paris, which dates from the 7th century, since when it has been conducted by the Sisters of Mercy. But we may trace far back, quite into mediæval times, the provision, such as it was, which existed in Dundee for the "relief of those affected with divers great sicknesses and diseases." In the days when leprosy and such scourges were common in this country reception houses were provided in out of the way places, which came to be known as the "Spital," Spitalfields, and ultimately, presumably, gave the name "Hospital" to the more efficient Institutions which have succeeded them. As early as 1392, however, we find that a Hospital or Almshouse was provided for Dundee through the liberality of "James Lindsay, Knight, in perpetual charity for the salvation of his soul." It was limited to certain old men belonging to the Order of the Holy Trinity, although in 1567 its beneficence was extended by Mary, Queen of Scots, granting certain manor places, orchards, and rents as "the Queen's donation made to the uphold of the Hospital." About the end of the 16th century a new Almshouse was erected, said to be represented in Slezer's view of the town, published in 1680, as a building at the west end, with a frontage to the river, at about the point where Tay Street now is. These establishments were not, however, Hospitals, as we are disposed now to regard them, but rather semi-monastic Institutions for "aigit and decayit burgesses, being single, neither having bairns nor wyiff," and were indeed in course of time devoted to purposes other than that of the original intention. It is interesting to note, however, that the endowments of these ancient Institutions even to this day produce a considerable annual revenue, which is administered for the behoof of poor, decayed persons, and is now known as the Hospital Fund. Such were the arrangements which obtained in the days when Grizzel Jeffry was burned in the Seagate for witchcraft, and George Wishart preached from the Cowgate Port during the great plague of 1544, keeping the infected on the outside of the gate and the sound on the inside to prevent contagion. The

gradual growth of the town, however, the introduction and extension of weaving and other industries, and the opening up of the Harbour brought with them the necessity for more effective medical and surgical aid for such as were in need of it. Accordingly in 1782 the Reverend Dr. Small and Mr. Stewart, surgeon, started a subscription for the establishment of a Dispensary.

They received most encouraging support in this laudable enterprise, and in due time the Dispensary was opened for the supply of medicines to the sick poor and the town divided into districts, each attended by a particular surgeon, an arrangement which, thus originated, still continues on practically the same lines. The advantages of the dispensary were so evident that it was soon felt that besides treating patients at their own homes some provision was necessary for such as would be benefitted by the care and attention it was possible to secure in the wards of a well-regulated Infirmary removed from uncomfortable dwellings and other influences which retard recovery. Such considerations in a few years caused the promoters of the infant Dispensary and its annual contributors to make the rather ambitious effort to procure the means for the building of an Infirmary. Such at all events was the unanimous resolution of the subscribers at a general meeting in 1793 when a Committee was appointed, who subsequently purchased a suitable site on the north side of King Street for £160, advanced in cash, with £18 4s. as an annual feu duty. A plan was prepared by Mr. John Paterson, architect, Edinburgh, and contracts entered into for finishing the work at an expense of 1000 guineas. The foundation stone was laid on 17th June, 1794. The managers of the Dispensary made an earnest appeal for funds, which was liberally responded to by town and country—the town of Dundee gave 10 guineas—by a recommendation to "the blessings of those who are ready to perish, and to the satisfaction which springs from the consciousness of beneficence." The population of Dundee was then about 20,000, and the number of patients who availed themselves of the Dispensary treatment during 1792 was 500. Regulations were drawn up for the conduct of the Dundee Infirmary and Dispensary, some of which, curiously enough, are in force to this day. In these days, a week's notice of the appointment of Nurses was fixed on the Infirmary gate. It was not until the spring of 1798, however, that the Infirmary was opened, and then on a much more limited scale than was originally intended. In 1796 a Dundee halfpenny was issued, bearing a representation of the building on one side. The old Infirmary in

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