

WILLIAM HUNTER (1718-1783)

A leading anatomist and obstetrician in mid-eighteenth-century England, William Hunter was educated at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. He pursued his interest in anatomical dissection and surgery in London, and began giving private lectures in 1746. At a time when opportunities to study human anatomy in medical schools were limited, Hunter's lectures filled a definite need. He continued to hold his lectures at his house until 1768, when he built the famous amphitheater at Great Windmill Street, with facilities for dissection and a museum--William Hunter's School of Anatomy. Here he lived and lectured for the remainder of his life, influencing a large number of future anatomists and surgeons.

In 1750 Hunter was granted the M.D. degree by the University of Glasgow. The following years brought him many honors and memberships in various scientific and medical societies. As the unrivaled obstetrician of London, he attended Queen Charlotte during her first pregnancy in 1762. On the day the Queen gave birth to the duke of Cornwall, Hunter wrote to his mentor and friend William Cullen: "I am very happy, and have been so for some time. I owe it to you and thank you from my heart for the great honour I now have... I mean having the sole direction of Her Majesty's health as a child-bearing lady."

Hunter's anatomical study of the human gravid uterus stands as his most significant contribution. Printed by John Baskerville, The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus (1774) contains 34 copper engravings, most of which were drawn by Jan van Rymsdyck. Several of the illustrations were presented life-size, and the volume was the result of many years of painstaking work. The Gravid Uterus has remained an example of superb anatomical illustration.

THE LAY OF THE MEDICAL GRADUATE.

From Simpson¹ I'm delivered, too,
For now my labour's o'er,
I've all the stages safely passed
Although my pains were sore.

To save me now from Lister's² hands
Needs no carbolic spray,
But sorry shall we be, my boys,
When he has gone away.

No more in English accents fine
Shall Rutherford³ propound
To me in Physiology
His questions so profound;
And Saunder's morbid specimens
No more shall puzzle me,
Although as an examiner
He fair is as can be.

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Long life to our professors, then,
We'll toast them every one,
Them we respect especially
Now that with them we're done.
Unto our noble selves likewise
We'll in a toast unite,
Whate'er our fate, where'er we roam,
We'll not forget to-night.

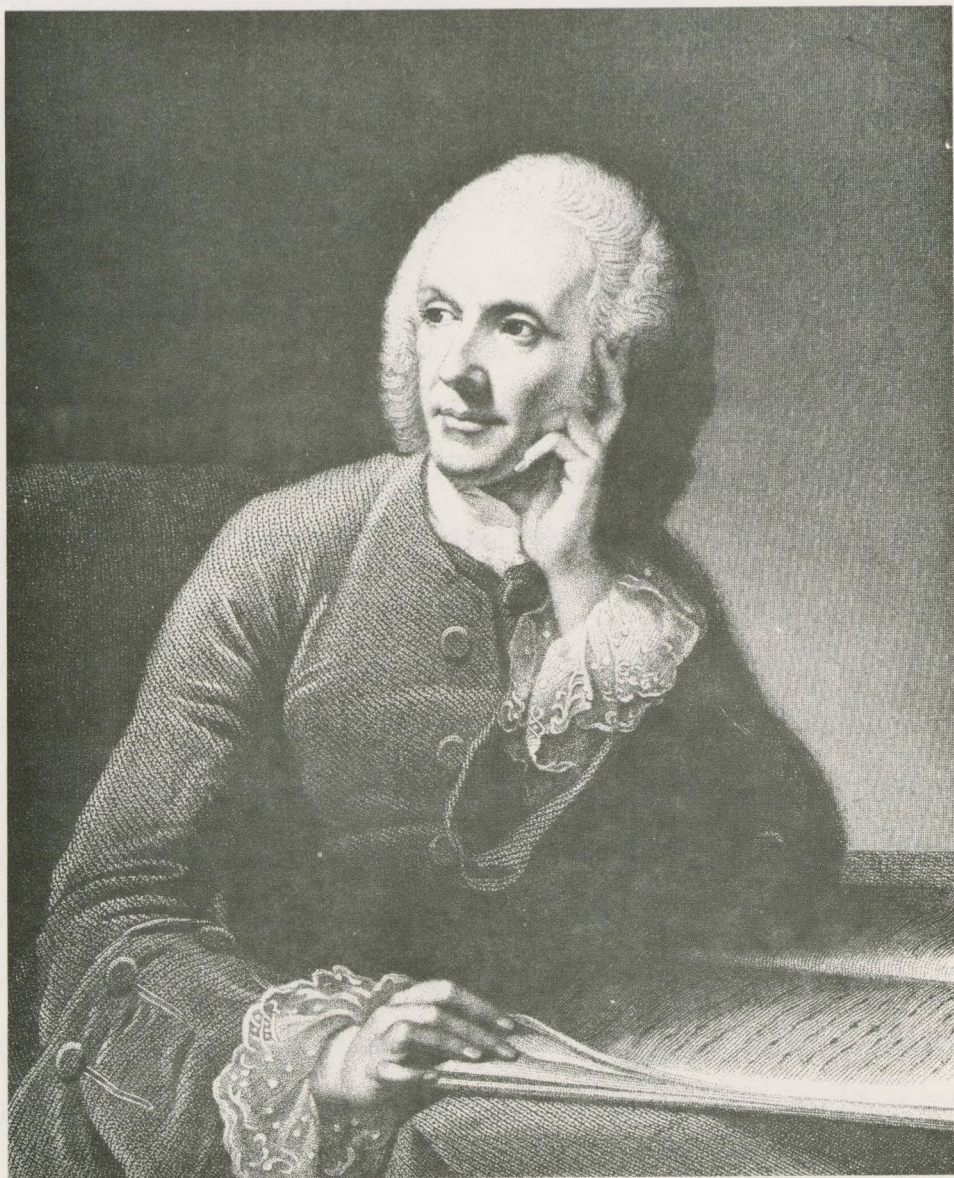
A.W.⁴

¹James Young Simpson (1811-1870), Professor of Midwifery at the University of Edinburgh.

²Joseph Lister (1827-1912), Professor of Clinical Surgery at Edinburgh, who made heroic efforts to fight surgical infection with carbolic acid.

³William Rutherford (1839-1899), Professor of Physiology at Edinburgh.

⁴Andrew Wood (1810-1881), Edinburgh physician and literary scholar, who translated a number of noted works into English.



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