THE HUNTER CENTENARY.

WAS JOHN HUNTER A STUDENT IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW?

By JAMES FINLAYSON, M.D.,

Physician to the Glasgow Western Infirmary, and to the Royal Hospital
for Sick Children; Honorary Librarian to the Faculty of Physicians
and Surgeons, Glasgow, etc.

IN Mr. Luther Holden's "Hunterian Oration" for 1881, a circumstantial looking account is given of John Hunter's matriculation at the University of Glasgow as a student of natural philosophy in 1745. I would be only too glad if it were possible to claim this distinction for our university. The entry quoted by Mr. Holden shows, no doubt, the name of one John Hunter as matriculating in that year, but it happens to be very easy to prove that this name does not represent the great surgeon. Mr. Luther Holden's quotation of the entry is:

Novr. 1745.

Nomina discipulorum classis quintæ (Nat. Phil.)
qui hoc anno academiam intrarunt.
Joannes Hunter filius Johannis Hunter (Natu
secundus) mercatoris quondam Glasgoviensis.

Mr. Holden lays stress on John Hunter's being entered as student of natural philosophy in his first year—a most improbable occurrence—and he tries to explain it. He also attempts a very forced explanation of his being entered as "Natu secundus," when he was, as he says, "not the *second* but the *tenth* child of his parents." Both of these laboured explanations are quite exploded by a simple inspection of the records, which Mr. Holden does not appear to have examined for himself, being (as he tells us in his Oration) "not sceptical by nature," although, curiously enough, doubting the current statements as to John Hunter's early life. The records were kindly shown to me by Professor Stewart, Clerk of the Senate, and his assistant, Mr. Addison. The words in brackets ("Nat. Phil.") in Mr. Holden's extract are interpolated; they do not exist in the entry. The names of the students are indeed correctly given as of the fifth class—"classis quintæ"—but this number indicates not the highest but the lowest in the faculty of arts. In the University Album, under 1745, we have first "Classis Physica," then "Classis Ethica," with their respective professors named;¹ then comes "Classis 3ta," with the name of the professor of logic; next "Classis 4ta," with the name of the professor of Greek; and last of all "Classis quinta," with the name of the professor of humanity,² as Latin was then and still is called.

The "John Hunter" who matriculated in 1745 began, therefore, as most of the arts students did, with Latin; and all the explanations given by Mr. Holden as to the entry in the natural philosophy class showing John Hunter's "predilections just in the very direction which we should have anticipated," are based on the erroneous interpolation of ("Nat. Phil.")—however this may have been introduced; this blunder, again, probably arose from the fifth class being taken for the highest, instead of the lowest, in the arts faculty. The explanation of "Natu secundus" advanced by Mr. Holden is that the great surgeon may have been so entered, because at that date, 1745, he was "the second *surviving* son," or because he was "the second son who bore the name of John in the family," inasmuch as the eldest child in the family, who died young, had also been named John—no doubt after his father, who was likewise John.

An inspection of the matriculations for 1745 shows at once why the "John Hunter" there enrolled was called "natu secundus," for his elder brother—expressly called "natu maximus"—was in the very same class, matriculated in the same year, and entered seven entries back. The entries are in the alphabetical order of the Christian names, and his name was James.

The following is the entry:

¹ It seems these first two classes were entered by their names—physics and ethics—as it was a matter of high dispute which of them should have precedence or be called "the first;" this plan evaded the difficulty. The others were given by numbers, as no dispute arose in their case.

² "H.L.P." = Humaniorum Litterarum Professor.

A.D. MDCCXLV.

Nomina discipulorum classis quintæ qui hoc anno
Academiam intrarunt sub presidio Magistri
Georgij Rosse H. L. P.

[Ninth entry] Jacobus Hunter filius Joannis Hunter
quondam Mercatoris Glasguensis,
Natu maximus.

[Sixteenth entry] Joannes Hunter filius Joannis Hunter (natu
Secundus) Mercatoris quondam Glasguensis.

It is well known that the surgeon had a brother named James, but he died before this year, as Mr. Holden himself mentions. The John Hunter, of the matriculation entry, was, therefore, clearly not the surgeon, for the precision of the designation of the father in both entries—John Hunter, lately merchant in Glasgow—stamps the James and John Hunter, who signed the University Album in 1745, as brothers. The word "quondam," as applied to the father, in the matriculation entry, does not, so far as I can gather, indicate "deceased," as Mr. Holden would read it, but simply that the person had ceased to be a merchant in Glasgow.³ There are several entries in the records of the Merchants' House of Glasgow of the names both of James and John Hunter; two of these seem worthy of notice as it is conceivable that they refer to the father of the students, namely, the entry of a donation in 1738, from "John Hunter, merchant," and an entry on joining the Merchants' House, of "John Hunter," in 1712. Extracts from the MS. records of the Merchants' House were kindly sent me by the clerk, Dr. W. H. Hill.

If the matriculation entry referred to by Mr. Holden had not happened to be so conclusive, from there being two brothers in the same Latin class, one would have further inquired how the surgeon's father could possibly be designated as "lately a merchant in Glasgow." He is not designated as a Glasgow merchant in the entry of William Hunter's matriculation in the University of Glasgow, which runs:

MDCCXXXI.

Nomina discipulorum classis quintæ qui hoc anno academiam intrarunt
sub presidio magistri Andree Rosse.⁴

Gulielmus Hunter: F. Johan. Hunter,
Inter dominos de Lang Calderwood.

The designation, "inter dominos," is to be construed, apparently, as one of the lairds or proprietors in Long Calderwood.

If it had been possible I would have pursued the matter further by searching the University class lists, to see what other classes, if any, John Hunter actually took, but there are no class lists preserved prior to 1794, and the matriculation entry was made by a student in the University Album once for all. No graduate of the name of John Hunter appears in the lists, but many students, although completing their course at the University did not proceed to graduation. Dr. William Hunter, for example, only appears in the list of graduates as M.D., 1750, long after he settled in London.

This statement of facts appears to me so conclusive as to the entry quoted by Mr. Holden not referring to John Hunter, F.R.S., that it seems quite superfluous to test the matter further by a comparison of the signature in the Glasgow Album with signatures known to be authentic, but as a matter of curiosity I had photographs taken of these entries and have sent copies to the Royal College of Surgeons in London.

³ So that at least Dr. W. H. Hill, clerk to the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons and to the Merchants' House, reads the entry, and his knowledge of our records in Glasgow is well known to be extensive.

⁴ There were two Professors of Latin of the name of Rosse—Andrew Rosse, 1706-1735; and George Rosse, 1735-1754. (Compare matriculation quoted from year 1745.)

THE late Mr. Albert Levy, of Grafton Street, Piccadilly, has by his will bequeathed £200 to the Margate Cottage Hospital, £200 to the Royal Sea-Bathing Infirmary, Margate, and £1,000 for such purposes of charity as his trustees may think most advisable.

THE board, staff, past and present students, and nurses of St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, of which H.R.H. the Duke of York, K.G., is President, have presented to him a wedding present consisting of a silver lamp of elegant design, bearing a suitable inscription.