The four Scottish Universities fared at the hands of the last Commission somewhat in the same way as did the unfortunate wayfarers who, according to the old myth, fell into the clutches of the robber Damastes. An incomprehensible desire for uniformity led the Commissioners to increase or diminish the size of each of the Universities in a manner at once arbitrary and futile. In one respect the victims have met a worse fate than that of the sufferers upon the "bed of Procrustes," since they have been, through another obsession of the Commissioners, tightly chained together. In the ancient legend there is no mention of such an added misery to the tortures inflicted by the robber chief. It must necessarily happen that the most restless member of the quartette will cause additional uneasiness to one or more of the other three. When the mother of the celebrated Sir David Baird was informed that her son was in captivity chained to another prisoner, her only remark was, "God help the lad that's chained to oor Davy!" Our sympathies are not so restricted as those of the hero's mother, and extend to all the members thus bound. None of the Universities is able to move hand or foot without consultation with the others, and the effect of this is to render the improvements and changes, demanded from time to time in consequence of modern advances, extremely difficult of attainment, by processes which are cumbrous and lengthy.

On all hands there are evidences of dissatisfaction with the present impossible state of matters, and a cry for autonomy is heard on every side. Each of the Universities should certainly be allowed to work out its development without let or hindrance, so as to specialise in those directions in which it may be most useful to the cause of education. Imbued with these sentiments, the University Court of the mother of the Scottish Universities, during the course of last winter, sent a communication to the
other three University Courts in favour of taking steps to obtain greater freedom of action for each. In doing this the St. Andrews Court suggested that, until the time came, as come it will, when the present shackles will be struck off, each of the University Courts should send representatives to a joint conference when a new ordinance is proposed by any of the Universities, so as to have a friendly interchange of ideas, and in this way to prevent or to lessen the present tendency on the part of the Universities to thwart each other in their attempts to obtain improvements in their arrangements. The St. Andrews proposal has so far been replied to only by the University of Edinburgh, and that reply is unfortunately characterised by timid procrastination and helpless irresolution. The reply, forsooth, is to the effect that the time is not opportune for the discussion of such a proposal. Surely something better might have been expected from the governing body of the largest of our Universities. It almost seems as if the members of the Edinburgh University Court were afraid that the suggestion which was made by the governing body at St. Andrews contained within it the germs of a proposal adumbrated by the Commission for a joint University Court for Scotland. So far as we have been able to understand, nothing of the kind ever entered the mind of any member of the St. Andrews University Court, and the proposal was accompanied by the explicit statement that the suggestion was only intended to facilitate deliberation until the time when each University will regain perfect freedom. Attempts at reform will be well-nigh hopeless so long as such feeble and faltering purpose as that which has unfortunately characterised the action of the Edinburgh Court in this matter is exhibited by the Universities. How long must we wait for a new Theseus to rid us of Damastes?

Dual Hospital Appointments. During the last few years a question in imperial and municipal government has not infrequently been raised relative to Members of Parliament or of Town Councils holding directorates in Companies which might militate against impartial action by them, if the concerns they were associated with became matters of public discussion or judicial consideration. Generally it has been decided that the purity of public life should be safeguarded by the retiral from such directorates of those who may at any time be called upon to act the part of judges in matters even remotely related to such Companies. In this age of democracy the tendency has also been to insist that men paid out of public funds should be restricted in their work, and devote their whole time to the appointments for which the public pay them. This often means inadequate remuneration, or, in many cases, the appointment of inferior men,
as the more energetic and capable do not elect to have their energies thus curtailed. We admit that public offices for which payment is received must be carefully safeguarded, so that the men who hold them do the work thoroughly and efficiently; but we confess to feeling surprise when an endeavour is made to tie down honorary officials, and prevent, or suggest the expediency of preventing, the physicians and surgeons in the Royal Infirmary from accepting or holding posts in hospitals outside the Infirmary. Some months ago a circular letter was addressed to the Honorary Staff of the Infirmary by the Managers, requesting that each member of the Honorary Staff should state what hospital appointments he held, and the time required to fulfil the duties.

When the circular was received by the Staff, it was felt that if the Managers knew how important it was that in every way experience of medical work should be acquired, especially by the junior members of the Staff, to fit them for the increased responsibilities which they would have later, but also by the seniors, who in smaller institutions had opportunities of doing highly specialised work, they would recognise that the circular had been sent through misapprehension, and the subject would drop. A small deputation from the Staff accordingly met a committee of the Managers, and explained that the appointments held by some of the Honorary Staff in other medical charitable institutions did not in any way interfere with those members doing their work efficiently in the Infirmary, and indeed enabled them to do it better, because such outside appointments went far to increase the efficiency of the individual physician or surgeon.

To some of the Managers of the Infirmary this aspect of the case did not appeal, and we understand that a further endeavour is being made to prevent members of the Honorary Staff from holding outside appointments in hospitals. On this occasion the attack, to use a Revenue phrase, is “at the source.” Candidates for assistant appointments or reappointments are to be required (so rumour has it), if elected, to ask permission from the Board of Management to accept, or continue to hold, outside positions. From one point of view this seems an unfortunate interference with the independence of individuals; but the more serious element of it is that, if plural appointments are prohibited, the Infirmary will suffer, as the patients will be debarred from receiving the best skill available. The suggestion of espionage of this kind is, to say the least, unworthy of men who hold the honourable position of managers of a noble institution. Hitherto there has been harmony between the Management and the Honorary Staff in the Infirmary; so long as the work has been efficiently done by individual men, credit has been given them for the time and strength they have expended in healing the sick, and it will be singularly unfortunate if the freedom of the Staff be interfered with. In all conscience, the work the Managers have to do is
large enough and important enough without the addition of supervising the private affairs of the individual members of the Honorary Staff. If work in the Infirmary has been neglected by one or more of the Honorary Staff, the duty of the Managers is clearly to speak to the official or officials who have been neglectful, but hitherto no rumour of a reprimand having been given for neglect has reached us.

**Dental Legislation.** At the annual meeting of the British Dental Association, from the mass of subjects discussed there emerged three matters of general interest. Firstly, it appeared that the two Bills introduced into the House of Lords by the initiative of the General Medical Council had aroused in the Association feelings of profound disappointment, and even of bitter resentment. These Bills are intended to deal with medical and dental practice by Limited Companies; and whereas medical practice by Companies is rightly proposed to be altogether prohibited, dental practice by a Company is permitted, provided it be carried on by registered dentists. The evils that follow on the practice of either medicine or dentistry by Companies are well known, and have been recapitulated by the witnesses who have given evidence before the Select Committee of the Lords to which the Bills were referred. The logical process which induced the General Medical Council to believe that the disciplinary powers it possessed could cope with these evils when perpetrated by dentists, but were of no avail in the case of doctors, is difficult, if not impossible, to understand. It is certain that the action of the Medical Council is regarded by the dental profession with dismay and indignation. It is felt, and we think justly, that the distinction drawn between the practice of medicine and dentistry is most invidious, and casts an unmerited slur on honourable practitioners, who, though their advice remained unsought and their wishes were ignored, have hitherto imagined that their interests were safe in the hands of their rulers, the General Medical Council.

Secondly came up for discussion the recent recommendation of the Medical Council that a period of two years' mechanical training be accepted as "sufficient" by the Licensing Bodies, instead of three years. The body of opinion outside the London Dental Schools is in favour of three years as the minimum. This reduction may attract students, but it seems likely to diminish the efficiency of their training. We therefore note gladly that the Edinburgh College has resolved to demand the full term of three years as heretofore.

The third subject claiming attention was the condition of the teeth in children of school age, and the means that should be taken to prevent and treat the dental caries, which seems everywhere to
be prevalent to an alarming extent among school children. It appears probable that legislative sanction may be given to the first step necessary, namely, inspection of the teeth. This, however, will not be of much avail unless its corollary—treatment by extraction or conservation—be provided for. The task is too great for philanthropic effort, and neither municipal or imperial economists can be expected to hail with enthusiasm a project estimated to cost £1,200,000 per annum. Still, knowing as we do that oral sepsis is not only a potent factor in the causation of many diseases, but also exerts a most maleficent influence in their course, we should welcome any feasible proposal to provide for the treatment of dental caries in those unable or unwilling to pay for skilled attention. Perhaps some day we may get a Minister of Health who may go to the country with a new election cry: "Dens sanus in corpore sano!" In the meantime the British Dental Association is showing a praiseworthy zeal in tackling a difficult and important problem.

Recent Investigations on the X-rays.

Each new field of investigation into the properties of the X-rays yields a rich and sometimes unexpected harvest. The Annual Report of the German Society for the Study of the X-rays is again replete with a number of interesting observations. The most injurious influence of the X-rays would appear to be exerted, first on the lymphoid, and secondly on the matrix or germinating tissues of the body; and even short exposures of the bones of young animals, and especially those of the skull, suffice to bring about serious impairment of growth. In the case of the testes the blighting influence of the rays falls mainly upon the cells of the seminal tubules, so that the spermatozoa disappear from the seminal fluid, while the intermediate tissue remains intact; and Willemin therefore regards the intermediate tissue as the source of the internal secretion of the testes, as, after the complete disappearance of the spermatozoa, the capacity for sexual intercourse is not diminished.

If animals at an early state of pregnancy are exposed to the rays, the products of conception may entirely disappear, while at a later stage the offspring are either born dead or die soon after birth. These results were more easily obtained in small animals up to the size of the rabbit than in larger animals such as the dog, in which the exposure had to be carried to the extent of burning the skin. The important observation was made, that while the seeds or seedlings of plants were seriously impaired in vitality and in growth as a result of exposure to the rays, bacteria were not influenced in the slightest degree, and their vitality was not in any way diminished even after exposures of several hours' duration.
Among the diseases which have been found to benefit from the influence of the rays are to be mentioned leukaemia, Hodgkin’s disease, external cancer, tuberculous glands, diseases of the skin, exophthalmic goitre, tuberculous disease of the fingers and toes, and certain diseases of the cornea, such as trachoma. In leprosy the results observed by Wilkinson in the Leprosy Hospital in Manila are truly remarkable, there being an entire disappearance of the diseased tissues after exposures of comparatively short duration.

Another interesting observation is the beneficial influence of the rays on such innocent growths as fatty tumours and keloid, for this would tend to support the belief that the origin of tumour growths is the same both in the innocent and malignant varieties.

We have merely touched on one or two points in the interesting report to which we have referred, but it is evident that in the course of the next few years still more remarkable developments will fall to be recorded.

We tender our congratulations to Sir Thomas E. Fraser on his admission to the honorary degree of Doctor in Science at the University of Cambridge. The public orator commended him for his services as Professor of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh, his labour as President to the Commission of Inquiry into the plague in India, and his physiological and therapeutic investigations.

On behalf of those medical men who make a point of arranging their holiday undertakings a long time in advance, it may be noted that the Sixteenth International Medical Congress is to be held in Buda-Pesth on the 29th of August 1909. This city, which is the capital of Hungary, and remarkable for the interest and beauty both of the town itself and of its surroundings, is justly famous for the excellence of the work which is done in its medical school and for the great reputation of the professors in its university.

At a meeting of Managers of the Royal Infirmary, help 24th June, Dr. Chalmers Watson was appointed Assistant Physician, and Mr. Wm. J. Stuart, Assistant Surgeon.