Richard Bright (1789-1858)

Born in Bristol, Bright enrolled in the medical course at the University of Edinburgh in 1808. With the capture of Iceland by Britain, great interest was stimulated in it. Bright applied to Sir George S. MacKenzie to join his expedition to study the new territory. Bright wrote the botanical and zoological chapters of MacKenzie's Travel in Iceland. After five months on this expedition, Bright enrolled at Guy's Hospital under Sir Astley Cooper. While at Guy's he made his first drawing of a granular kidney, and presented his first paper, at the Geological Society, on the stratification of rocks seen at Bristol. Bright soon developed intense interest in pathologic anatomy. Despite all this he kept up his interest in geology. He graduated with the medical degree in 1813. Subsequent history of Richard Bright and of his investigations into the disease named after him is so well known that it would be utterly superfluous to detail it here. To read Bright's own contributions to Guy's Hospital Reports is to get a liberal education. From May until October 1842, he was able to have two wards at Guy's Hospital set aside for the study of kidney disease, with a small laboratory between the wards. Bright says that this was "the first experiment which, as far as I know, has yet been made in this country to turn the ample resources of a hospital to the investigation of a particular disease by bringing patients laboring under it into one ward properly arranged for observation."  