

July 17 1904
CUS417/100.46

THE REGIUS PROFESSORSHIP OF MEDICINE.

A LETTER to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford from Sir John Burdon-Sanderson on the Office of Regius Professor of Medicine, with a Postscript, is we understand being circulated in Oxford.

In it the late Regius Professor first states the views held by some of the Teachers in Medical Science in the University regarding the formation of a Chair of Pathology out of the Regius Professorship in Medicine, and secondly traverses some of the statements regarding the duties of the Regius Professor of Medicine drawn up at a meeting of Oxford Medical Graduates held on January 5th of the present year.

Whilst we are fully in accord with Sir J. Burdon-Sanderson's opinion, that the University should not undertake to teach Clinical Medicine in Oxford, and with his desire to develop to the fullest degree the teaching of the scientific subjects connected with Medicine, we cannot agree with much that is contained in his letter; and certain statements in the postscript are in our opinion calculated to mislead Members of the University who are not conversant with the Statutes relating to the Examinations in Medicine of the University, or with the manner in which the Board of the Faculty of Medicine has hitherto proceeded.

The statements made by the Medical Graduates were drawn up at a General Meeting when the letter of the Statutes could not be closely examined and followed, and represent the manner in which, until quite recently, the Statutes relating to the Medical Examinations were interpreted and carried out by the Regius Professor, as the Executive Officer of the Board of the Faculty of Medicine.

The Statutes respecting the Examinations are as follows:—Statt. Tit. vi., Sect. vi. § 2 (3) "The Board of the Faculty of Medicine shall exercise a general "control over the conduct of the Examinations," &c., &c.

(4) "The Board shall have power to make such further regulations as it "shall deem necessary for carrying out the provisions of this section."

(5) "The Examinations shall be conducted by Boards of Examiners of "each of which the Regius Professor shall be a member; provided that the

“Vice-Chancellor may nominate some other Professor in the Faculty, to act, “in case of his absence, as his deputy.”

There is no other person except the Regius Professor connected with the Board of the Faculty who is in a position to see that the directions of the Board are carried out; and the want of such direct supervision and organisation has recently made itself very seriously felt in the final Examinations, and has led to an unfavourable report being made of them by the Inspector and Visitor of the General Medical Council.

It is nowhere laid down or implied in the Statutes that the sole duty of the Senior Examiner is to register the decisions of the other Examiners; on the contrary, such importance does the University attach to his presence at the Examinations, that it is provided that in his absence a deputy should be appointed.

Until recently the Regius Professor organised all the details of these final Examinations. He furnished each Examiner with a time table, showing the hours for the Examinations and the places where they were held. He made arrangements with the Staff of the Radcliffe Infirmary for the attendance of cases for the Clinical Examinations, and during the *vivâ voce* Examinations he considered it his duty to be present and assist the other Examiners. No directions are laid down in the Statutes as to the manner in which the Question Papers are to be drawn up, and we do not know what may be the practice at the present time; formerly each Examiner sent a certain number of questions to the Regius Professor, who arranged them, and was responsible for the preparation of the Examination Papers; and it certainly was not the case in former years that the Senior Examiner took no part in the Examinations.

Sir John Burdon-Sanderson is no doubt correct in pointing out that no statutory duty is imposed on the Regius Professor of “adjudicating on the Thesis” presented for the M.D. Degrees. The words of the Statute are (§ 4, 2), “The dissertation shall be delivered to the Regius Professor of “Medicine and shall be submitted by him to and be subject to the approval “of those Professors of the Faculty and Examiners for the Degree of Bachelor “of Medicine for the time being whose special subjects are dealt with in it.” How far the approval of the Regius Professor is required in all subjects, is not directly laid down; but it is evident that should the subject of the Dissertation be Medical, the approval of the Regius Professor, as a Professor of the Faculty concerned and as Senior Examiner, is essential.

That the Regius Professor should take an important part in all Examinations in Medicine is also shown by Statt. Tit. vi., Sect. viii. 2, where it is laid down that the Regius Professor "shall preside in Preventive Medicine" and (3) "the Examiners other than the Regius Professor of Medicine shall be "nominated," &c., &c.

Sir John Burdon-Sanderson states that it "appears to have been the view "of the Commissioners (of 1877) that the emoluments of the Regius Professorship, might at some future period, be made available for such branches of "instruction in Medical Science as can be advantageously given in Oxford." On careful examination of the evidence we fail to find any justification for this statement; the questions quoted, 3137 and 3138, were put to Sir Henry Acland by the Chairman in the course of his examination without any recorded consultation with the other Commissioners, and no views on this question were expressed by them.

It should be borne in mind that the ultimate object of all the Scientific work done in Oxford in relation to Medicine, is to make our Graduates fit to practice their profession. It appears to us that the most important function of the Regius Professor of Medicine is to bring the Scientific work of the Students in Oxford and their Clinical work done elsewhere into proper relation with each other, and that the absence of any such co-ordinating and controlling influence must have a prejudicial effect upon the Medical Education of our Graduates, and upon the reputation of our Degrees in Medicine.

W. S. CHURCH, }
J. F. PAYNE, } *Members of the Board of the*
SAMUEL WEST, } *Faculty of Medicine.*

February, 17, 1904.