

E.W.A.Walker to Professor Thomson:
Jan. 6th 1904.

Elm Croft,
Witney, Oxon.

Dear Professor Thomson,

I was not able to stay in town for Tuesday's meeting, but have had a good deal of news of it since.

The meeting was largely attended and was practically unanimous, only Pembrey and Boycott refusing to sign a document which was drawn up. I hear that many kind and graceful things were said about Ritchie, but that the meeting was strongly in favour of trying to obtain a Regius who was acquainted with the conditions of Clinical work in London etc. etc. and strongly opposed the merging of the post of prof. of Medicine in that of teachers of Pathology.

Incidentally I hear of Herringham and Rose-Bradford in addition to the previous names mentioned.

I gather that a good deal has already been done in writing to the Vice-Chancellor, the Prime Minister etc., if so you have probably heard of it already. It seems also that before advising the King, Balfour will by common precedent submit the name suggested to Church as Pres. Roy. Coll. Phys. to know whether there is anything against the appointment. In such case it is likely to be said that the general feeling of Oxford Graduates is against R.

It seems to me the question reduces itself largely to this, whether we want the Regius to be one of the active teachers in the Scientific School of Medicine, or to be a man of considerable outside influence and one who, as they suggest, will form a link between Oxford and the Oxford men both students and Seniors in London or elsewhere. I am rather afraid that it looks as if the majority of people would be alienated by the appointment of R. There will probably be a meeting called of all the members of the School before very long. If so, would it not be well for your side of the question to be represented as strongly as possible in the interests of the school. The question seems to be a good deal modified if the clinicians can bring forward someone really good, and not old fossils or incompetents as was expected. And I think it is very important to prevent, if possible, the formation of rival parties in the School, whatever side gains its point in the present issue.

If R. is the man for us it should be possible to convince at any rate a proportion of the Med. Graduates to whom the suggestion has come as a surprise that the best interests of the School lie in that direction. And in that case, with a divided vote, Church would not be in a position to oppose R. on behalf of the Oxford Graduates.

I am sure the Oxford view needs to be clearly put before people if bad feeling is to be avoided for it is not one which is self-evident, though I agree myself that its advantages probably much outweigh the possible disadvantages which might result. I send you a copy of the document which was signed on Tuesday!--

"We learn that it has been suggested by certain teachers in Oxford that the present Readers in Pathology shall be appointed Regius Prof. of Med.

"We understand that one of the chief arguments in favour

of that

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of that proposal is that in this way the emoluments of the Chair of Medicine might be made to supplement the income of the Reader in Path.

"We beg leave to protest very strongly against this proposal for the following reasons:-

The work of the Med. Student of Oxford fall into ^{two} parts; the first part is preparatory and is done in Oxford; the second part is clinical and done elsewhere at the large clinical schools. The first part should be adequately represented in Oxford by the Professors of the various Preliminary Sciences, the second part can only be represented by the Regius Professor.

The Regius Professor is responsible for the organisation, direction and conduct of the Final examinations in Oxford which gives the Licence to practice and should himself take part in them as the Regius Prof. used to do. He has also to adjudicate and advise the University upon the Thesis presented for the M.D. degree.

"The Regius Prof. ought, therefore, to be a Physician of great experience in clinical work and clinical teaching: he ought to be thoroughly familiar with the system of instruction at the large medical schools, and with all the details of the student's clinical work. He ought to be fully conversant with the requirements of the licensing and examining bodies and of the Medical Council.

"He ought to have the requisite knowledge to enable him to guide wisely the deliberations of the Board of the Faculty of Medicine in these respects and to bring into harmonious relation the work of the Student of Medicine in Oxford with his work in the clinical school.

"As the Regius Prof. - the representative of the University in Medicine not in Oxford only but in the world at large, he ought to be a man of established reputation in Medicine and one who could worthily uphold the dignity of the University in the estimation of the profession and the public.

"He ought to be a man who could be accepted as the leader and representative in Oxford of the Medical Graduates, and one to whom they would all with confidence give their loyal support, for, without this support, the Medical school in Oxford cannot prosper as it should.

"On these grounds we think it desirable that the Professor should, if possible, be an Oxford man, personally familiar with the University curricula and traditions.

"The proposal to convert the Regius Professorship of Medicine into a professorship of any single branch of medical study is a question of vital importance to the status of Medicine in the University, and to the welfare of the Medical school, and should not be lightly decided.

"We do not, however, think this change desirable at the present time.

"The Regius Prof. has important practical duties to discharge in Oxford. He alone is able to co-ordinate the various departments, a task for which clinical knowledge and clinical experience are essential.

"We therefore advocate the appointment of the Regius Professor upon the same conditions as heretofore, and are prepared

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to recommend a candidate who possesses all the necessary qualifications."

This is not a great manifesto and R. satisfies most of its points, but it means business.

Yours sincerely,
E.W.A.Walker.