

The Regius Professorship of Medicine in Oxford.

DEAR SIR,

In a report, published in *The Times* of January 6th, of a meeting of the Medical Graduates of Oxford engaged in teaching in London, a statement appears which it is proposed to circulate among Oxford Medical Graduates. This statement appears to us to involve a misunderstanding as to the present duties of the Regius Professor of Medicine, and we therefore invite you, on reading it, to bear in mind the following facts.

1. Since the operation of the Medical Statute of 1886, many duties discharged in previous years by the Regius Professor are now regulated and performed by the Board of the Faculty of Medicine. The statement drawn up at the meeting contains the phrase "the Regius Professor is responsible for the organisation, direction and conduct of the final examinations in Oxford". This is not in strict accordance with the University Statutes. These enact: that the Regius Professor shall be the Senior Examiner in all the different examinations for the Medical Degree, final or otherwise; that he shall fix the place or places of examination; and that he shall sign the lists of the candidates who have satisfied the examiners especially concerned in the several examinations; beyond these duties he is given no special statutory control over the final examinations. It is moreover enacted by Statutes that, as regards each of the Medical Examinations, the Board of the Faculty of Medicine shall exercise general control over the conduct of the examinations, shall make such further regulations as it shall deem necessary for carrying this out, and shall determine the days and hours at which the several parts of each examination shall be held.

2. The statement contains a sentence to the effect that the Regius Professor "has also to adjudicate and advise the University upon the thesis presented for the M.D. degree". This is liable to be misunderstood for it is prescribed by statute that the dissertation for the degree of D.M. shall be delivered to the Regius Professor, 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.

3. At the close of the statement the following sentences occur: "The Regius Professor has important practical duties to discharge in Oxford. He alone is in a position to co-ordinate the various departments forming the medical curriculum, a task for which technical knowledge and wide clinical experience are essential".

As regards the duties he has to discharge it should be especially noted that one essential and statutory professorial duty is omitted in the statement, namely that he shall lecture on such subjects connected with the study of Medicine as the

University shall from time to time by Statute determine, or in default of any such Statute, on such subjects connected with the study of Medicine as he shall judge most advisable. Moreover it is expressly enacted that he shall deliver in each year two courses of lectures at least, each course containing at least eight lectures.

As regards the co-ordination of the medical curriculum, it must be pointed out that the Board of the Faculty of Medicine is empowered to exercise a control over the curriculum, and for this purpose all the subjects involved are represented. The Board consists of twenty-five members, eight of whom are especially concerned with the various preliminary sciences, five with the subjects of the first B.M. examination, and ten (including the Regius Professor) with the subjects of the Final Examination; apart from the Regius Professor the nine members representing the final subjects are all actively engaged in medical or surgical practice.

4. It appears from *The Times'* report that the following two resolutions were adopted by the meeting:—

“That in the opinion of this meeting the Regius Professor of Medicine should be a physician who is representative of medicine in its widest sense”.

“That it would be detrimental to the best interests of medicine in Oxford if the Regius Professorship were converted into a professorship of any one branch of medical study”.

The first resolution will probably command universal assent, but the second one appears to us to be opposed to the spirit of those University Statutes which enact that the Regius Professor shall lecture on some subject connected with the study of Medicine, and thus ensure that the comparatively small emoluments of the chair (£400 a year) shall be utilised in providing for some branch of medical study. In view of the fact, correctly given in the statement, that the second part of the work of the Oxford medical student is “clinical and done elsewhere at the large clinical schools”, the only practicable branch of medical study which the Regius Professor can advantageously undertake in Oxford is Pathology.

We ask you to consider the statement in the light afforded by the foregoing remarks, and to pause before signing a document which is in several particulars misleading as regards the actual condition of the Oxford Medical School and its relation to the Regius Professorship of Medicine.

We are, dear Sir,
Yours truly,

FRANCIS GOTCH, *Professor of Physiology;*
Fellow of Magdalen College.

J. S. HALDANE, *Lecturer on Physiology;*
Fellow of New College.

ARTHUR THOMSON, *Professor of Human*
Anatomy, Exeter College.