

Fairbairn-Thomson letters, 1904.

Fr. Dr. Fairbairn to Prof. Thomson.  
(Script.)

60, Wimpole Street,  
London, W.

February 1, 1904.

Dear Professor,

Sorry I worry you. I take fits about this business and let off steam by wasting my spare time in the empty consulting-room in firing off epistles.

To tell the truth, I have of late begun to fear that what you said is true, that we are striving after an ideal we can't reach, and to dread that we may put back the hands of clock in our efforts. Hence, I am after a temporary expedient to give us time to know where we are, and what we are to do. I think a young man of the Herringham stamp would be a very doubtful experiment and that is what I want to avoid. And it will be difficult for the Crown to make a proper nomination amidst all this din of the contending parties. If that had time to quiet down, all would be right. I saw Church on Saturday and I don't think he will allow himself to be nominated. He said he was too old to take up a new thing and evidently his wife is greatly against the change - so I fear that is off, and like you, I shall ~~await~~ the decision of the Crown with as much equanimity as I can, though regretting that Oxford has not a man of the Clifford Allbutt type to come in. We're rather a barren lot at present.

You are keen on lectures; we are keen on someone to keep the science party balanced and not particular as to teaching. You have a good man ready, we have not, so as far as the cards lie, you seem to hold the winning trump.

I write this as an apology for worrying you; I didn't mean to disturb your peace, I only thought I had a brilliant temporary expedient which ought not to be lost for want of due advertisement.

Do not acknowledge this.

Yours ever,

JOHN S. FAIRBAIRN.

P.S. I don't mean that I feel less strongly on the principle, but that I appreciate the difficulty in carrying it out, and of taking a proper view amid all this clamour. Hence my desire for a senior man of the Church or Payne standing, who will give us time to look round, without blocking the way for years and years as would be the case with either H'm (Herringham?) or Ritchie, or anyone under 60.