

Fairbairn-Thomson letters. 1904.

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

60, Wimpole Street,
London, W.

January 15, 1904.

My dear Professor Thomson,

Thank you very much for your lengthy epistle, which I and sundry others have studied. It makes your side of the question quite clear, but it does not make me more enamoured of it. I am going to the meeting called for Tuesday next and I hope to hear all that is to be said. Your strongest point for so revolutionary a change is the difficulty of obtaining a suitable man, and though we've not given up trying, I fear that is a difficulty. We are trying to get Church to reconsider his decision, but I doubt whether there is much chance. Payne apparently is not acceptable to Oxford though I should have thought he would have been very useful. He has served on many councils, knows medical educational lines well, he was on the Roy. Com. for London Univ. etc. He seems to feel that he would not be a persona grata so is out of it. One or two of the retired Oxonians would stand, but I suppose would not be any better, - though we would sooner see one such in for a few years till we agree on what is required and have time to thrash the matter out.

With regard to the Board - who are the electors you speak of? I certainly think we might approach them. It is not to the presence of the preliminary science representatives that I object to but to their extraordinary preponderance. What with the Sadlerian Prof. of this and the Savilian of that, with the Readers in Mechanics etc. they have far more than their share. Then there is the difficulty about getting men to go from town. To a junior man it is a serious tax and he risks losing the small items which make his practice, while you find the senior men conservative or too busy to attend regularly. Still, I think something could be done. The Board have not been too successful in the matter of Examinership etc. at times, but these are matters only for private conversation.

As to the Litchfield Lecturers I suppose that is a fixed matter. To some of them we would have no objection, to others we would. There are several I certainly do not consider of the class fit to legislate for the University.

However, I expect to see you later, and we may have some time for a private talk. Many thanks for writing so fully to us. We all appreciate your kindness even though we are going to oppose your views. We mustn't allow even University politics to come in to spoil our old relations. There is no one I feel more for than Ritchie, about whose head and bushy eyebrows this storm is raging.

Yours

JOHN S. FAIRBAIRN.