

NOTES FROM BOOKS

(SCRIPT)

RECTORIAL CONTEST, EDINBURGH, 1908

University of Edinburgh.

June 16th. 1908.

My dear Osler,

Thanks for your letter. It is difficult for me to offer advice on the matter of the Lord Rectorship because I cannot as a Professor make any direct effort to ascertain the current of opinion amongst the students. Still I have been indirectly making a few enquiries and looking into the records of old contests.

There cannot be a doubt that in former contests the non political candidate (when there was one) has usually been un fortunate at the poll. Carlyle defeated Disraeli; Ruskin and Professor Blackie were defeated by their political opponents. I think these are the only three, (by the way I think that Christison was also defeated) cases where a non political candidate has stood.

On the other hand conditions have greatly changed. The women put in Haldane at the last election and the deputation said that you would have a strong backing there, then the political candidates (Wyndham and Churchill) are both very weak: it is difficult to say which is the most objectionable, and this no doubt would weigh.

I attach some importance to Dr. Norman Walker's letter. He is a politician and a very aggressive one on his own side he is distinctly a force.

From what I say therefore I think you will see that it would not be a walk over. Political excitement enters largely into these contests.

I hope I have made it clear to you that with us all, I mean with those in the University who do not possess a vote, you would receive a most cordial welcome as Lord Rector.

Yours ever truly,

D. E. Cunningham.