

**To the Right Honourable the Lord Provost, magistrates, and town-council of Edinburgh.**

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Wood, Alexander, 1817-1884.  
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**Publication/Creation**

[Edinburgh?] : [publisher not identified], [1855?]

**Persistent URL**

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD PROVOST, MAGISTRATES, AND TOWN-COUNCIL OF  
EDINBURGH.

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MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

When the resignation of our much esteemed Emeritus Professor, Dr Alison, was announced, I had immediately laid before you an application for the Chair, accompanied by a "*First Series of Testimonials*" in my favour, embracing—

Ten from Professors in British and Irish Universities.

Eleven from former Teachers of Medicine in Edinburgh,  
and in other Medical Schools.

Five from my Colleagues in the Edinburgh School.

Fourteen from distinguished Medical Authors not included  
under other divisions.

Twenty-three from Medical Practitioners in Edinburgh.

Six from Medical Practitioners in the Provinces.

Nine from Medical Practitioners former Pupils.

All these Testimonials were given to me when I was a Candidate for the Chair of Practice of Medicine in the Glasgow University,\* and I have not thought of renewing them on the present occasion, because the duties of the two Chairs being identical, the qualifications required must be identical also, and these certificates are, in my estimation, more valuable, because given apart from all those disturbing influences which must necessarily affect an election nearer home.

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\* In regard to the Glasgow election, I think it right to remark, and all the more freely, because it will be applicable to several of the candidates on the present occasion, that the appointment rested with the Crown, and, I believe, it will not be denied, that such was the strong pressure made in Glasgow to prevent the appointment being conferred on any but a townsman, that applications, even from Edinburgh—the first Medical School in Europe—were scarcely regarded.







I have now the honour of submitting for your consideration some additional Testimonials in my behalf.

These testimonials, like those which I formerly laid before you, are intended to bear on four points :—

- 1st, The position which I am considered to hold as a *practitioner* of medicine.
- 2d, The estimate formed of what I have written on the *practice* of medicine.
- 3d, The opinion entertained as to my ability as a long-tried teacher of the *practice* of medicine.
- 4th, The consideration attached to my opinion on difficult cases in medical *practice*, by those who have met me in consultation in various parts of the country.

I have been thus particular in limiting the evidence I have the honour of submitting to you to these four points, because it humbly appears to me that they are all that are essential, and that they are all-essential to one who aspires to be a teacher of the *practice* of medicine.

*Anatomy* teaches the structure of the body, *physiology* explains the offices of that structure, *pathology* informs us how that structure and its actings are altered by disease, and a knowledge of these are no doubt essential as a basis for *practice*. Each of these, however, might be well and easily taught, as they often are, by men who have had no practical dealing with disease, with a view to its removal or cure.

*Practice of Medicine*, on the other hand, imperatively demands that its teacher should be familiar with disease, as well as with its products, and should have shewn by years of practice that he has made its study the great object of his life.

I venture to state all this to explain why, when, many years ago, circumstances led me to look forward to the day when I might possibly offer myself as a candidate for the Chair of Practice of Medicine in some university, I adopted the course I took, and propose now shortly to trace.

Two paths were open, the first by careful and constant work in the dissecting room, and by writing largely for the various



medical periodicals, and connecting myself ostensibly with them, to acquire a name, and form a connection with medical men over the country, who might hereafter testify on my behalf. The other, without neglecting these accessory studies, to dedicate my chief time to the study of actual disease, not as we see it when transplanted into hospitals,\* but in its natural and usual habitats, as it will be seen hereafter by by far the larger proportion of those who are students at our universities, and thus to be able to present to these students, life-like pictures of disease, and the result of multiplied and extended experience in its treatment. The latter course I adopted, and I did so because I felt that it would be a real misfortune to the students of a class of *practice* of medicine, were their teacher to become so enamoured of those studies, which, after all, are mere accessories to practical medicine, as to give to them an undue prominence in his course. How far I have succeeded in attaining what I aimed at is another and a different question, which it would ill become me to attempt to solve. If I have lived and practised among you in Edinburgh so long, without my name as a *practitioner* of medicine being familiar to you, I cannot hope to convince you that I have any claims for the chair, even were I to heap on your table cart-loads of testimonials.

One result of the confidence which your townsmen have reposed in me as a practitioner, has been to confine me much to Edinburgh. I have not been able, since I became known at all in the medical world, to visit distant places for any length of time, and thus to form acquaintances with Continental and other physicians, who might in this way have

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\* I held the office of Physician to the Stockbridge Dispensary from 1839 to 1844, and of the Royal Public Dispensary from 1844 to 1847. I was asked by an influential manager of the Infirmary to become a candidate for a Physicianship in that Institution, but declined to stand, on the ground that private practice was a much better school for training,—the late lamented Dr. Abercrombie having long before pointed out to me the significant fact, that not one of the Infirmary Physicians in his day ever succeeded as medical practitioners in Edinburgh.









been induced to testify in my favour. I humbly venture to hope, however, that I have been more usefully, if not so pleasantly occupied, in the constant visitation and care of the sick, and that I have thus been enabled to accumulate an amount of *practical* experience, without which the largest theoretical knowledge may serve only to mislead. As I am thus *only* known on the Continent by what I have written, I attach all the more value to those foreign testimonials which I have received. No man in active practice can spare time to write very much, except on practical subjects, but I humbly venture to hope, that the evidence I have laid before you proves that I have contributed to the literature of medicine works which are not unknown. Another qualification of great importance to a public teacher is, the faculty of being able to convey the knowledge he possesses in a clear and perspicuous manner to others. I am glad that so many of my testimonials are decided on that point. One other circumstance in regard to testimonials I think it right to note. When a candidate for the Glasgow Chair, I applied for testimonials to Sir James Clarke, Bart., Sir John Forbes, Bart., and Dr Charles J. B. Williams, with all of whom I am personally acquainted. They all, however, stated that they had refused to give testimonials to any of the candidates on grounds somewhat similar to those expressed by Sir Benjamin Brodie,\* when applied to

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\* *From SIR BENJAMIN C. BRODIE, Bart., Sergeant Surgeon to the Queen, Surgeon to H.R.H. Prince Albert, Fellow and One of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, Foreign Correspondent of the Institute of France, Author of various Works.*

BROOME PARK, SURREY, August 21. 1855.

MY DEAR SIR,—I wish you all success, and, I am sure, that if elected, you will be a worthy successor to Dr Alison, and do honour to the University.

But I have a difficulty in sending you a special testimonial, as I have of late years declined doing so on other similar occasions, as not wishing to interfere in the elections in the Scotch Universities, and, I am afraid, that if I were to act otherwise on the present occasion, I should give some just cause of complaint to some others of my friends.—Believe me, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

(Signed) B. C. BRODIE.

on this occasion. Of course, I did not again solicit certificates from them, believing that they would be equally averse to interfering in an Edinburgh, as in a Glasgow election.

Should I be so fortunate as to succeed in obtaining the chair, I will feel it a duty to make such arrangements as shall leave me ample time for the full discharge of its duties. Fully alive to the deep responsibility of teaching others, I shall make their instruction my first duty, and leaving to those whose commissions require it from them, to instruct them in Physiology and Pathology, I shall strenuously endeavour to make them learned, able, and accomplished practitioners.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

Your obedient humble Servant,

ALEXANDER WOOD.

EDINBURGH, 2 ST COLME STREET,  
*September, 1855.*



on this matter. Of course, I do not again wish to  
leave them believing that they will be equally even to  
interest in an *illustration*, and a *illustration*.  
I should be so fortunate as to be engaged in obtaining the  
data I will feel it a duty to make such arrangements as shall  
have the single view for the full display of its fullness. Fully  
then to the deep responsibility of teaching others, I shall make  
my instruction my first duty, and having to those whose  
conscience requires it from them to instruct them in the  
history and philosophy, I shall endeavor to make  
them feel the *illustration* and *illustration*.

I have the honor to be,

Yours and Obedient,

John William Wood

WILLIAM WOOD