

Letter to the Right Honorable the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town-Council : in reference to the vacant Chair of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh [and to Robert Christison's application for the post] / [Robert Liston].

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LETTER

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD PROVOST, MAGISTRATES, AND
TOWN-COUNCIL,

IN REFERENCE TO THE

Vacant Chair of Materia Medica

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

BY

ROBERT LISTON,

LECTURER ON SURGERY IN EDINBURGH, AND ONE OF THE SURGEONS
OF THE ROYAL INFIRMARY, &c. &c. &c.

W.

EDINBURGH :

JOHN CARFRAE AND SON, DRUMMOND STREET.

1832.

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LETTER, &c.

*To the Right Hon. the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and
Town-Council of the City of Edinburgh.*

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

THE death of Dr. DUNCAN imposes an important duty upon you—that of choosing his successor; and I trust that I may be permitted to offer a few observations on this subject.

It is very probable that three descriptions, at least, of candidates will present themselves to your notice, from among whom you must make your election—*first*, The medical practitioners of this city; *second*, Professors of other branches of medicine; or, *third*, Private lecturers.

With respect to the first class it may be truly affirmed, that were Europe to be searched, a more enlightened, talented, and zealous set of men are not to be found—men, whose chief object is to advance science and do good, and who are always ready to render aid to the poor, without hope of fee or reward. But that it is not among this highly respectable body of men that you are to look for a successor to Dr. DUNCAN, will be made quite apparent by the few, out of so many learned men, who in all probability will think themselves qualified for the duties of the situation. They know well that although they may possess the requisite general knowledge of their profession, *that teaching* is an art which is not easily acquired. How many talented classical scholars are there in this city, and yet how few good teachers! If there were a vacancy in the High School, allow me

most respectfully to ask, would you vote for a candidate who had been altogether unaccustomed to the labour and the details of teaching; or would you vote for one who had spent much time in acquiring the requisite knowledge and tact, and who presented himself before you, not only as a tried, but a successful teacher of that branch of education? Would you not, at all events, ask the first, for the titles of his elementary works, as affording some proof, or some indication, of his capacity for the office? Should there be a candidate who has neither been a popular lecturer on some branch of medical science, nor a successful author, the interests of the City, which are intimately blended with the prosperity of the University, demand that you should reject him; and this is exactly what I feel persuaded, from an intimate knowledge of the characters of many gentlemen in the Council, will be done, in despite of the interests arising from private friendship, or political feeling.

2dly, You have undoubtedly the power to translate a gentleman already in the enjoyment of a professorial chair, to one which is more lucrative. The number of candidates from this respectable class will very much depend upon the arithmetical question of pounds, shillings, and pence. On this point, several important considerations will no doubt occur to your own minds. You are well aware that no professor will dare to stand the fate of an election, unless he can prove to your satisfaction that he has already been eminently successful as a teacher. You will then have to consider whether you are to be the guardians of his private pecuniary wishes, or the guardians of the public welfare, and whether, in the event of his advancement, you shall be able to place your hands upon as able a person to fill his chair? If all interests can be improved, then undoubtedly such an individual will have very strong claims to your support. But I hope that you will be pleased to recollect, that the translation of

a talented professor from one medical chair to another is always a dangerous experiment—fully as dangerous as that of removing an accomplished teacher of English literature to be an instructor in the Latin or Greek languages. I fear that some of you may imagine the translation of a professor from chair to chair to be quite similar to that of a clergyman from St. Andrew's to St. George's church; but the circumstances are very different. The clergyman employs the same prayers, takes his text from the same Bible, and uses the same language, ideas, doctrines, and style of argument; whereas the medical professor has to enter upon an entirely new field, to turn his mind in an almost opposite bent, and to compose entirely new lectures, unless, as has been more than once done, he makes his former lectures subservient to his new chair, and improperly draws much of his matter from that source.

But let me appeal to facts, and seriously ask you what the University has actually gained or lost by all translations which have been made, undoubtedly with the best intentions, by your predecessors in office. Has Mr. LESLIE been such a useful and successful teacher of Natural Philosophy as he was of Mathematics? Has Dr. HOME increased or diminished his reputation, and that of the University, by his translation from the chair of *Materia Medica*, which he filled with so much success, to that of the Practice of Physic, which he now occupies? Have science and the interests of humanity been advanced or retarded by this translation? Lest any of you may not have seen the high testimonials Dr. HOME received from his brethren in the University, who must be supposed to have had the best and least deceptive means of judging of his acquirements and qualifications, I beg to subjoin a copy of the document.

“ To the Right Honourable the Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

“ June 2, 1821.

“ MY LORD—As your Lordship has communicated your particular desire that we, professors of medicine in the university, should express our opinion of the qualifications of Dr. HOME to fill the chair of the Practice of Physic, we have great pleasure in complying with this request.

“ We beg leave to premise that as the number of our own students depends upon the prosperity of the University, there are no individuals so deeply interested as we are in the selection of a fit person to fill this chair, so important to the medical school.

“ We have no hesitation in stating, that the opportunities which Dr. HOME has had of acquiring an accurate knowledge of the practice of physic have been of the most extensive and advantageous kind, and of these he has availed himself to the utmost : That the teaching of Materia Medica and Clinical Medicine, in which Dr. HOME has been so long engaged, necessarily requires a correct and minute acquaintance with the practical part of the science, which we know Dr. HOME to possess in a very eminent degree ; and that we consider the gradual and very great increase in the number of students of Materia Medica since he became professor, as the most decided and satisfactory proof of his ability and popularity as a teacher.

“ We may be permitted to add our thorough conviction that the labours of Dr. HOME have had their full share in maintaining the fame of the medical school ; *and we entertain no doubt that they will continue to preserve it undiminished should your Lordship and the other patrons confer upon him the honourable situation of Professor of the*

Practice of Physic, to which he aspires.—We have the honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient servants,

“ANDREW DUNCAN Sen.

“THO. C. HOPE.

“ALEX. MONRO.

“JAMES HAMILTON.

“ROBERT GRAHAM.”

It is painful to me to be obliged to state that such is the nature of testimonials in general, and that these are so easily obtained, either by the self-esteem of the parties asking, or by the good-natured weakness of the givers, that I believe sensible men place little reliance upon such evidence; and the notorious instances of the fulsome certificates which have been presented to the town-council during the last fifteen years by medical men, are sufficient to create disgust at the sight of such documents.

Dr. DUNCAN, whose death has unhappily deprived Great Britain of the most learned and accomplished of her medical men, and whose vacant chair you are now called upon to fill, was likewise translated from one chair to another. There never was, or can be, a change of chairs made in this University from which so much good was expected to result. Dr. DUNCAN was a first-rate chemist, a discoverer of some important chemical principles, the most successful writer on the chemical part of *Materia Medica* in Europe, admitted to have been an excellent teacher of Medical Jurisprudence, a man who was deficient neither in zeal nor assiduity,—and yet it is universally allowed he made a most decided failure in his new chair. He had not in fact the particular talent to enable him to teach *Materia Medica* in a manner calculated to benefit and interest the minds of students.

Many striking illustrations might be offered of the following facts, which it is important the honourable patrons should bear in mind. A gentleman may bring forward the highest general

testimonials of zeal, talent, great mental powers, and scientific acquirements; he may even be a successful author, and yet he may be found upon trial to be a miserable teacher. He may have been a highly popular teacher of Mathematics, Materia Medica, or Medical Jurisprudence, and yet may prove an unpopular, and therefore unsuccessful teacher of Natural Philosophy, Practice of Physic, or Materia Medica, as has already happened in your University. You must be aware that I could, on the other hand, give instances of some of the most useful and successful teachers, and whom you would not change for any others that Europe could afford, who have never distinguished themselves by writing a line, or making one important discovery.

It may be supposed to be a great hardship upon the present Professor of Medical Jurisprudence, who has distinguished himself above all other men in this country in that department, and whose talents and honourable sentiments are worthy of the highest commendation, that his translation to a more lucrative chair should be objected to, but *you* must keep in view the interests of the public at large, and not those of any individual. You must ask yourselves whether it will not be more serviceable to the fame of the University to retain his services in the present chair, to master the difficulties of which he has devoted so many of the best years of his life, than to remove him elsewhere; and whether the previous melancholy failures of equally talented men are not sufficient to deter you from making any such experiment? The friends of the professor will naturally endeavour to persuade you to cater for *his* pecuniary interests; but although the Materia Medica chair is at present higher in pecuniary emolument, yet you have it in your power at any time to make the one chair as valuable in a pecuniary point of view as the other, by doing, with respect to graduates, what the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, the Uni-

versity of Dublin, and even the Worshipful Company of Apothecaries of London have already done, with respect to the candidates for their diplomas, viz. by rendering attendance on the class of Medical Jurisprudence imperative, as on those of Chemistry, Materia Medica, and other branches of medical science. But even should you not think such a step expedient, truth compels me to say that the friends of the professor ought not to complain, because few men in the profession of equal talent in their own departments ever attain the rank of a professor; still fewer arrive at such an honour before the age of forty or fifty: while the present Professor of Medical Jurisprudence received all the honours, privileges, and emoluments of his professorship at a period when still a student, and before he had distinguished himself in any way in the medical world. But I may take the liberty of stating to you, the honourable patrons, that all scientific medical men in Great Britain will hail with delight the intelligence that you have done an act of justice to the professor, and to the public at large, by including the class of Medical Jurisprudence in the curriculum of medical study. This would amply reward Dr. CHRISTISON for all his exertion; retain him in a chair which it will be difficult if not impossible to find a candidate to fill with such eclat, and prevent an experiment being tried which you know to be so fraught with danger.

Lastly, The third class of persons from which you may choose a professor, is that composed of Lecturers in the different schools of Great Britain. It may be mentioned, without fear of contradiction, that to the unwearied zeal, indefatigable exertions, and eminent talents of the private lecturers in this city, Edinburgh at present owes much of its reputation as a medical school. To use the words of Professor THOMSON, "If they are not the pillars of the university, they are the buttresses to its walls." The interests of this

class of medical men have hitherto been too much overlooked, although many of its members have likewise distinguished themselves by their writings, as well as by the collections in their museums, which latter, taken even individually, would grace any university.

I am warranted in stating that these gentlemen look with the warmest interest to the result of the approaching election. If they see a chance of their exertions and merits being appreciated and rewarded, it will be a stimulus to them, which must ultimately prove an incalculable advantage to science, at the same time that it will reflect credit on the patrons. Besides which, the appointment of one of their number cannot fail to be highly beneficial to the community, as well as to the interests of the University, by pointing out to all who possess talent as teachers, and who are ambitious of becoming professors, the only sure and honourable road to promotion. Nothing but a high sense of duty to the public, and best wishes for the prosperity of this school, could have induced me thus to come before you; and I sincerely hope that some good may result from the representation which I have taken the liberty of making. I trust that my character is so well known as to prevent any one from accusing me of being actuated by private friendship or secret enmity.—I have the honour to be,

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

Your obedient humble servant,

ROBERT LISTON.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD PROVOST
OF THE CITY OF EDINBURGH.

Edinburgh, May 18, 1832.

MY LORD,

*I*N offering myself as a candidate for the vacant chair of *Materia Medica* in this University, I do so under a deep feeling of its importance, as one of the most essential chairs in the course of Medical Education ; and of its peculiarity as requiring in the Professor not only experience in the practice of medicine, but likewise extensive chemical acquirements.

I trust that I may be found to possess a competent degree of Chemical knowledge ; and in regard to Medical experience, I certainly could not have enjoyed a more favourable opportunity than that of practising publicly as one of the Physicians in the Infirmary and Fever Hospital here for several years past, during the last of which, along with my colleague, Dr Gregory, I have conducted a course of clinical instruction.

It may not occur to all, that between my present chair and *Materia Medica* there is a close alliance. But when it is considered that the most useful drugs are also active poisons, this will be at once apparent ; and, accordingly, in many continental universities, and in that of London, the two subjects are taught by the same Professor.

Should I be so fortunate as to succeed in my present application, it will be my anxious endeavour not only to discharge my duty as a lecturer, but likewise to prosecute on a wider field those experimental researches with which I have been hitherto much occupied, and which of late years have been pursued with such signal utility and success in Germany and France, and have so much simplified and improved the *Materia Medica*.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble Servant,

R. CHRISTISON.

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I.—From DR MACWHIRTER, *President of the College of Physicians, Edinburgh.*

4, Ainslie Place,

10th May 1832.

MY DEAR LORD PROVOST,

HAVING been requested by Dr Christison to express to your Lordship my sentiments as to his qualifications for the Chair of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh, I beg to apprise your Lordship in the first instance, that I now address you under a strong sense of responsibility on account of the official station I hold in a body, which has in times past supplied the Medical School of this city with most of its brightest ornaments, and which can never look to the filling up of vacancies in its chairs without much solicitude.

It may likewise, I trust, be considered not inappropriate or unbecoming in me to add, in reference to the particular chair, that, in consequence of having held for several years the office of Apothecary-General on the Bengal Establishment, besides being extensively engaged in practice, it is in my power to speak with some confidence as to the kind of information in Materia Medica, which it is essential for the practitioner in medicine to acquire during the period of his academic studies.

Materia Medica, as a branch of medical education, comprehends the application of drugs and articles of diet to the treatment of diseases, or *Therapeutics*, and the mode of preparing them for medical use, or *Pharmacy*; and of the latter division the most important, and one of growing importance, is *Pharmaceutical Chemistry*, comprising the applications of chemistry in preparing drugs, ascertaining their quality, and discovering their active ingredients. Both of these divisions, Therapeutics and Pharmacy, ought to be sufficiently discussed by the Professor of

Materia Medica. If he do not, a serious blank would be left in the system of medical education in this University.

Your Lordship will therefore perceive, that a peculiar union of qualifications is required for teaching this branch of medicine. The Professor must be a practising physician, who has opportunities of deducing from the frequent observation of disease, the principles of treatment which he inculcates; and he must be a scientific chemist, practically conversant with the chemistry of drugs, especially with the department of analysis as applied to drugs of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, by means of which the *Materia Medica* has been, during the last fifteen years, singularly enriched and simplified, and is undoubtedly yet to receive very great improvements.

The concurrence of such qualifications in the same individual is rare among physicians in this country. Yet I am confident they are possessed by Dr Christison to an extent hardly equalled by any person in Britain. I therefore earnestly and conscientiously take the liberty of recommending him to your Lordship's choice and that of the Patrons of the University.—I have the honour to be,

My dear Lord Provost,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and very humble servant,

The Right Hon.

JOHN MACWHIRTER, &c.

The LORD PROVOST.

II.—*From DR ABERCROMBIE, Physician to the King for Scotland.*

Edinburgh, May 14, 1832.

I HAVE the highest opinion of the talents and acquirements of Dr Christison;—and I think him qualified in a peculiar manner for the Professorship of *Materia Medica*. This important department of Medical Science appears to me to require a combination of qualifications not often to be met with in the same individual. It is founded on a correct acquaintance with the general principles of Therapeutics, and an extensive knowledge of facts relating to the action of a great variety of substances upon the human body:—But the proper selection and application of these facts requires the knowledge of the practical phy-

sician ; and in the present state of the science, it can neither be taught nor prosecuted as it ought, without a minute acquaintance with, and much practice in, the Art of Analytical Chemistry.

In all these respects the qualifications of Dr Christison are of the first order. His general talents and acquirements in science and literature, are universally acknowledged by the medical profession. His situation as one of the Physicians of the Royal Infirmary, has brought him into notice as a zealous pathologist, and judicious practical physician. As a skilful analytical chemist, his elaborate work on Poisons is at once sufficient to establish his reputation ; as in it are contained the most minute experimental inquiries respecting a variety of those substances, which are well known to prove, according to the mode of their employment, either active medicines or dangerous poisons. Dr Christison has already established his character as a public teacher, his mode of communicating instruction being clear and perspicuous. I have also occasion to know that his attention was at an early period directed to the subject of *Materia Medica* ; and that his studies when on the continent were in a great measure guided by an intention which he then had of lecturing on that science.

JOHN ABERCROMBIE, M. D.

III.—*From J. H. WISHART, Esq. Surgeon to the King for Scotland, to DR CHRISTISON.*

MY DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, 14th May 1832.*

As I understand that you are a candidate for the vacant chair of *Materia Medica*, it gives me much pleasure to add my testimonial of your abilities to those you must receive from your numerous friends,—and I have no hesitation in saying, that I know none more qualified than yourself to hold that situation, not only from the zeal you have displayed in the cultivation of medical science,—your general information and professional talents,—but more particularly from your great knowledge of chemistry,—which must always be considered a most essential requisite in the study of *Materia Medica*. I therefore conceive that you are eminently qualified to fill that chair with honour and credit to yourself, and that your appointment would be well calculated to maintain the high station to which the branch of

Materia Medica has been raised by the distinguished talents of our late much lamented Professor.—While I thus express to you my own sentiments, I consider it right to add, that, in frequent conversations which I have had with my most esteemed friend Dr Duncan, he always mentioned you in the highest terms, and repeatedly said, that he knew “none so well qualified to fill the Chair as Dr Christison.”

With best wishes for your success, believe me,

My Dear Sir, &c.

(Signed) J. H. WISHART.

IV.—*From* DR DAVIDSON.

Edinburgh, May 14, 1832.

DR CHRISTISON having done me the honour to request my opinion as to his qualifications for the Chair of Materia Medica, now vacant in the University of Edinburgh by the death of Dr Duncan, I take the liberty of assuring the Honourable Patrons, that I am acquainted with no individual, either personally, or by reputation, so well fitted for discharging the duties of the important situation which he is desirous to obtain.

He is a clear-headed, sagacious man, with great natural talents and remarkable power of application; and to all these qualities he adds the advantage of a careful education, both general and professional,—whilst he possesses in an eminent degree the valuable faculty of communicating to others, with clearness and facility, that knowledge which he has acquired by study and experience.

I know that Dr Christison has made himself thoroughly acquainted with all the branches of medical education usually taught in the class of Materia Medica;—that his character stands high as a scientific and practical chemist;—whilst his situation as Physician to the Royal Infirmary has afforded him a most favourable opportunity for the study of Pathology and Therapeutics,—an advantage which his various publications afford ample proof of his having cultivated with assiduity and success.

It is perhaps right to mention, that I once entertained and even expressed the suspicion, that Dr Christison might be inclined to devote a large, if not an undue share, of his course of

Materia Medica to the department of Chemistry and Chemical Pharmacy ; but I have since been convinced, by communication with Dr Christison, that my fears were groundless, and that his views and intentions, should he become Professor of Materia Medica, are highly judicious.

I cannot conclude without again stating my conscientious conviction that there is not an individual in this country in every respect so well qualified as Dr Christison, for filling the Chair of Materia Medica with honour to himself and advantage to the University.

J. HENRY DAVIDSON, M. D.

V.—*From Dr ALISON, Professor of the Theory of Physic.*

Edinburgh, May 14, 1832.

HAVING been intimately acquainted with Dr Christison ever since he was appointed Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in the University of Edinburgh, I hope I may be excused for taking the liberty of stating to the Honourable Patrons of the University my conviction, that his qualifications for filling the Chair of Materia Medica to the credit and advantage of the University are greater than those of any other individual in this country, whose claims are known to the profession.

This opinion is founded, partly on my knowledge of Dr Christison's excellent natural abilities, his complete literary, scientific, and medical education, and his habits of mental exertion ;—but chiefly on his well-known and uncommon proficiency in Chemistry, and other branches of Science, intimately and necessarily connected with the subject of Materia Medica,—on his experience and distinguished success as a teacher of Medical Jurisprudence,—and on his careful attention to the practice of the profession, particularly during the last five years, during which time he has been one of the Physicians to the Royal Infirmary, and has enjoyed, and diligently cultivated, ample opportunities of extending his acquaintance with pathology and with practice.

W. P. ALISON, M. D.

VI.—*Letter from Sir GEORGE BALLINGALL, Professor of Military Surgery.*

MY LORD,

Edinburgh, May 14, 1832.

THE interest which, as Patron of the University, you are known to take in any thing which concerns that institution, encourages me to look with confidence to your forgiveness for venturing to intrude upon you in favour of one of the candidates for the vacant chair of *Materia Medica*.

Upon Dr Christison's taste and talents for analytic chemistry, so capable of an advantageous application to the *Materia Medica*, I will not presume to enlarge, because these will be fully spoken to from other quarters, and because my own studies have for many years been so little directed to chemistry, and so extensively given to the practice of my profession, that I cannot consider myself competent to speak to my colleague's acquirements as a chemist; and it is as a medical practitioner only that I wish to be considered as venturing to offer an opinion.

As a Physician to the Royal Infirmary, and recently as a Clinical Lecturer in that institution, Dr Christison has for a series of years had an extensive field of practical information laid open to him; and I can state from personal knowledge, that this,—the most desirable of all fields for such inquiries,—he has assiduously and successfully cultivated with a view to pathology, to the treatment of disease, and to the operation of remedies. In proof of this, I may advert to several of his papers in the *Medical Journals* of the day, some of which have been translated into foreign languages.

Of his book on Poisons, also translated into some of the continental languages, and every where considered as a standard work, it would be difficult for me to speak in terms sufficiently expressive. Dr Christison's hard earned reputation and unique acquirements in Medical Jurisprudence, appear to me to afford the best possible proof that he is, *a fortiori*, pre-eminently qualified to fill the chair of *Materia Medica* with credit to himself and advantage to the University; for, however highly I may appreciate the talents required for this last mentioned professorship, I certainly cannot consider it as requiring the same variety

and extent of information as the office which Dr Christison now so worthily holds.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obliged and humble servant,

(Signed) GEORGE BALLINGALL.

To the Right Hon.

The LORD PROVOST of Edinburgh.

VII.—FROM DR GRAHAM, *Professor of Botany.*

62, Great King Street,

14th May 1832.

My DEAR SIR,

I received your note this morning. If you think it of the smallest use to you to receive a statement of my opinion regarding the proper objects of a course of lectures on the *Materia Medica*, the requisites in the Professor, and your fitness for the chair, I am most willing to give it.

There can, I think, be but one opinion regarding the proper object of such lectures. In order to make them really scientific, and in order to produce in a student any interest beyond the mere desire to know the bulk and appearance of a dose of salts, or the colour and taste of a piece of rhubarb,—the chemical and botanical history of the substance must be unfolded to him, and he must be made to see the *rationale* of its exhibition in the Practice of Physic. The teacher of *Materia Medica* must make to bear directly upon his subject, the general principles which the student should have learned from the teachers of Chemistry and Botany, and he must train the student for the still farther concentration of his ideas in the application of remedies by the Professor of the Practice of Medicine. Without this chain of principles, I can conceive no dose so nauseating as a dry lecture on drugs, and I am quite sure that the weary students would soon add it to the professor's catalogue of emetics.

Let it be recollected, too, that these are not merely matters of speculative interest. It is perfectly notorious that the great extent of knowledge of these subjects possessed by Dr Duncan enabled him to detect and expose many errors into which the compilers of *Pharmacopœias* have fallen regarding the names, nature, and origin of drugs themselves.

The teacher should also of course explain the action of many agents of a different description, which powerfully affect the body in health and in disease, as climate, exercise, thought, &c. &c.

These are the sentiments which I think must be entertained by every body on this subject. In reference to your qualifications to conduct such a course, I really feel that it would be absurd in me to say much.—You have made a reputation for yourself;—it is broadly before the world, and every where acknowledged as good. Your powers as a chemist in regard both of organic and inorganic substances have long ranked very high, and I can, from personal knowledge, bear the most ample testimony to the unceasing activity with which you bring all the powers of your mind to apply your various acquirements in the exercise of your profession at the Royal Infirmary, where you have had far greater opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of the phenomena of disease, and the influence of remedies upon it, than private practice alone can give to any man in a much greater length of time.

Believe me, my Dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

(Signed) ROBT. GRAHAM.

VIII.—From JAMES SYME, Esq. *Surgeon to the Surgical Hospital.*

IF the objects of the Electors who are to appoint a professor of Materia Medica be to provide for the efficient instruction of the students—to maintain the reputation of the University—and to reward the successful exertion of professional talents, they cannot, so far as I am able to judge, have any hesitation in choosing Dr Christison. The high esteem in which he is every where held as a scientific chemist,—his well-known dexterity and skill in performing the operative manipulations of analysis,—the great attention he has bestowed on the preparation and effects of medicines and poisons,—the opportunities he has had of acquiring practical information in the treatment of disease,—his success as an author, and his popularity as a lecturer, constitute claims no less strong than they are fully recognized by the profession both at home and abroad, and which

afford good grounds for regarding his appointment to the important chair of Materia Medica as an event not of questionable, but certain and lasting benefit to the University.

(Signed) JAMES SYME.

2, *Forres Street*,
14th May 1832.

IX.—*From Dr J. C. GREGORY, Physician to the Royal Infirmary.*

Edinburgh, 14th May 1832.

As Dr Christison's colleague in the Royal Infirmary, during the last four years, I bear most ample and willing testimony to the extent and variety of his professional attainments, and to the zeal with which he has uniformly availed himself of the opportunities afforded by that Institution for the cultivation of Pathology, Therapeutics, and the Practice of Medicine.

As his pupil, during the last three years, in the class of Medical Jurisprudence, I can also bear witness to the great and rapid increase in the number of students attending that class since it has been taught by Dr Christison; and it consists with my knowledge that many of those who have lately attended his lectures were not required to do so by any regulations for professional degrees.

I may be permitted to add, as the result of personal observation, that, from his natural clearness of intellect and precision of thought, as well as from his long experience, Dr Christison possesses, in a very eminent degree, that facility of communicating knowledge to others in a distinct, impressive, and at the same time pleasing manner, which is the most valuable of all qualifications in a public teacher.

(Signed) J. C. GREGORY, M. D.

X.—*From Dr ADAM HUNTER to Dr CHRISTISON.*

18, *Abercromby Place*,

MY DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, 14th May 1832.*

I CAN scarcely presume to think that my opinion can have much weight in giving a bias to the sentiments of the Patrons of the University on the present important occasion, but if it

should prove even of the slightest value, I do now most cheerfully give it.

Before filling up the Chair of the Professor of *Materia Medica*, now vacant by the death of Dr Duncan, it appears to me highly important that the Patrons should keep in view what the duties are which a teacher of that department of medicine will be called upon to perform, and if I may venture to express an opinion upon the subject, I would say that those duties are such as will be most fully and perfectly performed by a gentleman whose knowledge and experience as a physician is equalled by his tact and success in the practical details of Chemistry. Entertaining such an opinion of the duties of the Professor of *Materia Medica*, I feel myself justified in saying, that the Patrons of the University will discover, in the general professional estimation of your attainments in these departments of science, sufficient grounds to lead them to the conclusion, that they will not be able to find a more suitable candidate than yourself to supply the vacancy now at their disposal.

It is unnecessary for me to say one word relative to your chemical acquirements, as I have no doubt you will receive ample testimonials on that subject from other friends who are better qualified than myself to express their opinions, but I may be permitted to say, from long-continued personal intercourse and observation of your habits and pursuits,—from a consideration of the position you have held for so many years as Physician to the Royal Infirmary,—as a Professor of and successful teacher of Medical Jurisprudence,—as a Lecturer on Clinical Medicine,—as well as from the high estimation in which your various professional writings are held in this and in foreign countries,—you are possessed in no ordinary degree of those qualifications which will enable you to discharge with success the important duties of Professor of *Materia Medica*, should you have that honour conferred on you by the Patrons of the University.

I remain,

Dear Sir, &c.

(Signed)

ADAM HUNTER.

XI.—*From* DR SPENS, *Physician to the Royal Infirmary.*

MY DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, May 14, 1832.*

As you are a candidate for the Chair in the University, vacant by the death of my much valued friend Dr Duncan, I with much pleasure offer my humble but decided testimony in your favour. Having officiated as my clerk for several years, from summer 1818, in the Royal Infirmary and Queensberry House Fever Hospital,—having been my colleague in the College of Physicians for ten, and as Physician to the Royal Infirmary for five years,—I have had ample opportunities of becoming acquainted with your natural abilities and various extensive acquirements, which indeed are so generally known and acknowledged, that I cannot flatter myself that any testimony from me can add to the high character you have already established. One of the most important duties of the College of Physicians is the revisal and republication of their Pharmacopœia, when necessary, in which the College have again for some time been engaged, and as they have committed to you a principal share in the preparing of that difficult work, sufficient evidence is afforded of the opinion the College entertain of you. I shall only add, that, in my opinion, you are eminently qualified to fill the Chair of Materia Medica; and, with sincere wishes for your success,

I remain,

My dear Sir, &c.

(Signed) TH. SPENS.

XII.—*From* JOSEPH BELL, Esq.

MY LORD PROVOST, *Edinburgh, 16th May 1832.*

BEING requested by Dr Christison to express to your Lordship my opinion of his qualifications as a candidate for the vacant Professorship of Materia Medica in this University, I beg permission to say a few words in favour of his claim to that most important chair.

The estimation in which Dr Christison is held, not only at home, but abroad, might almost preclude the necessity of particular testimonials on this occasion. But there is one essential

quality of a lecturer, in which he pre-eminently excels, and with regard to which, those only who have had personal intercourse with him can do him justice,—I allude to his felicity in communicating information, which is so peculiar, that, even were his general attainments of a far inferior order, this alone would give him a great advantage over most competitors. His own knowledge being not less varied than minute, he possesses the power of imparting it to others in a clear and impressive manner,—and by the judicious selection and arrangement of his materials, he sustains the attention of his hearers in a degree which I am persuaded has seldom been surpassed.

May I be excused for observing, that, while Dr Christison's labours as Professor of Medical Jurisprudence have amply justified his election by the Honourable Patrons,—yet that department of medical education, important as it is, must yield in point of general utility to the Chair of Materia Medica ; and if he shall succeed in his present application, I believe that I express the almost unanimous opinion of the profession, when I state my conviction, that the same talent and the same assiduity which have already done such honour to the University and to himself, will be exerted with increased effect, in a field more fitted for their unrestrained exercise.

It only remains for me to add, that Dr Christison's appointment as one of the Physicians to the Royal Infirmary, must greatly enhance the practical value of his lectures on Materia Medica,—such a situation affording, by common consent, the best opportunity of ascertaining the effects of medicines,—while his habits of chemical analysis cannot fail to impart increased interest to the Pharmaceutical department of his Course, which, without such habits, must be more or less imperfect.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

JOSEPH BELL.

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I.—FROM DR THOMSON, *Professor of Chemistry, Glasgow, to
the LORD PROVOST.*

MY LORD PROVOST,

*Glasgow College,
7th May 1832.*

THOUGH I have not the pleasure of being personally known to your Lordship, the motive which has led me to trouble your Lordship with this letter will perhaps plead my apology. I have been informed that the health of Dr Duncan, Professor of *Materia Medica* in the College of Edinburgh, has become so bad that an active canvass has begun for the succession to his chair, and it is even probable that in no long period of time your Lordship, with the Magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh, will be called upon to appoint a new Professor to that important chair. Though I sincerely hope that the derangement of the health of the present distinguished Professor is only temporary, and that he will still be spared to discharge the important duties committed to him, yet, as your Lordship is doubtless aware of the precarious situation in which he is, I may perhaps be forgiven, if I presume, at the request of one of the candidates, to state my opinion respecting his qualifications.

Having received a considerable part of my education in the College of Edinburgh, being a graduate of that University, and having spent some of the happiest years of my life in Edinburgh, when the reputation of the College was at its highest point, and its Professors men of genius and celebrity, I entertain toward it a feeling somewhat akin to that which most persons have for the place of their nativity, and have an eager desire that the Professorships should be filled up, as they become vacant, by the ablest men that the country can produce.

The class of *Materia Medica* cannot be properly filled ex-

cept by a person well acquainted with the details of practical chemistry. I have had occasion lately to study the processes in the three British Pharmacopœias, and the result is a conviction that several of them are disgraceful to the chemical knowledge of the three colleges. Edinburgh led the way to the first great improvements in pharmacy, and her improvements were adopted by the London and Dublin Colleges. There is at present room for a still greater improvement, and it would be a subject of no little triumph to all her *alumni*, if the College of Edinburgh were again to lead the way. Whether this will happen or not must depend in a great measure on your Lordship and Magistrates and Town-Council of Edinburgh. It is in some measure the business of the Professor of Materia Medica in the College of Edinburgh to see that the Edinburgh Pharmacopœia keeps pace with the improvements in chemical science, and this he can never do unless he be acquainted with the details of practical chemistry.

There is at present in the College of Edinburgh a man better fitted for filling that chair, than any one else that Scotland can produce. I mean Dr Christison,—a man of first-rate abilities, enthusiastically devoted to his profession; who has shown himself acquainted with practical chemistry by various important papers which he has given to the world; who, by his Treatise on Poisons, has increased the reputation of the University, and established his own character in every part of the world where medicine is cultivated. But your Lordship cannot be ignorant that he possesses all the requisites for filling that important chair, and that such an appointment would undoubtedly have a strong tendency to carry the reputation of the medical school of Edinburgh still higher than it has yet reached. Apologizing for the intrusion of this letter,

I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's humble Servant,

(Signed) THOMAS THOMSON.

II.—*Letter from Dr BABINGTON, London, to Professor Jameson, Edinburgh.*

MY DEAR SIR,

May the 9th 1832.

I LEARN with much concern, that, owing to the indisposition of Dr Duncan, the chair of Materia Medica in your University

is likely to become vacant. I am also given to understand, that, if this event should occur, Dr Christison, your Professor of Medical Jurisprudence, is likely to become a candidate. Though not personally acquainted with Dr Christison, I confidently conclude that he must be considered as eminently qualified to undertake the duties attached to that appointment. That he is well versed in all the departments of chemical science is manifested by his justly esteemed publications; and it must be acknowledged, that from the connexion which inseparably exists between *Materia Medica* and Pharmacy, the number of important articles with which *materia medica* has been enriched under chemical research, and the light which this has thrown on the nature of drugs, and their application to practice, the selection of such an individual must be considered, in a professional point of view, as of the highest importance. In this sentiment I am joined by my son Dr Benjamin Babington, whose late pursuits have rendered him familiar with Dr Christison's acquirements.—I remain, &c.

(Signed)

WM. BABINGTON.

III.—*Letter from Dr PROUT, London, to Professor Christison, Edinburgh.*

Sackville Street,

DEAR SIR,

May 9, 1832.

ALTHOUGH I have not the pleasure of being personally known to you, I am well acquainted with your name and reputation, and think you eminently qualified to fill the office to which you aspire.

The extent of chemical science must necessarily prevent the Professor of Chemistry from doing justice to pharmacy in his course, and the introduction of late of so many chemical remedies of great power renders an extensive knowledge of chemistry in the profession of *Materia Medica* daily more and more necessary; I have no hesitation, therefore, in saying, that my opinion of your fitness for the office is fully as much founded upon your eminence in this department, as upon your high physiological and pathological acquirements.

With every wish for your success, I am, Dear Sir, &c.

(Signed)

WM. PROUT.

IV.—*From Dr WATSON, Professor of Medical Jurisprudence,
King's College, London, to Dr Christison.*

24, Henrietta Street, Cav. Square.

MY DEAR SIR,

May 9, 1832.

I OUGHT to apologize for having so long neglected to reply to your last kind letter ; but having just heard that you are a candidate for the chair of *Materia Medica* in Edinburgh, I cannot refrain from saying how much I shall rejoice, for the sake of medical science, no less than on your own account, to learn that you have been successful. It appears to me that your peculiar position is most happily calculated to render you an efficient teacher of the subjects of that professorship. You are known to have given much attention to pathological researches ; your office of physician to the Infirmary engages you in the daily application of the various substances of the *Materia Medica* to the cure of diseases ; and the nature of your present chair requires not only expertness and facility in the chemical analysis of drugs, but sagacity also in tracing their agency upon the living body. That you are, in point of fact, eminently possessed of these combined qualifications, no one who has studied your admirable work on Poisons can entertain a doubt.

The new views which the successful prosecution of analytical inquiry has lately opened in Chemical Pharmacy, and the consequent discovery or simplification of remedies of great importance and power, have rendered that department of science too large to be satisfactorily comprehended in the general course of lectures on chemistry, and afford a prospect of greatly augmenting our resources in effecting, what after all is the main object of all such pursuits, the relief of human suffering.

That the professed cultivation of this most interesting branch of science in the University of Edinburgh may fall into your able hands, is the earnest hope of,—My Dear Sir, &c.

(Signed) THOMAS WATSON.

V.—*From Dr BRIGHT, Physician to Guy's Hospital, London.*

11, Saville Row, London,

May 9, 1832.

IT affords me most unfeigned satisfaction to express in unmeasured terms the high estimation in which I hold the pro-

fessional character of Dr Christison, both as a physician and as a chemist, and having deeply at heart the proceedings of the University of Edinburgh, I feel that nothing would more conduce to its prosperity than his promotion to the Chair of Materia Medica, for which he appears, from the nature and extent of his chemical acquirements, combined with his medical knowledge, to be most peculiarly fitted.

(Signed) RICHARD BRIGHT, M. D.

VI.—From Dr ELLIOTSON, *Professor of the Practice of Physic in the University of London.*

I FEEL it impossible to use language too strong in expressing my opinion of Dr Christison's talents and attainments as a Physician and a Chemist; and I feel satisfied that no one who wishes well to the University of Edinburgh would look for an abler successor to Dr Duncan in the chair of Materia Medica.

(Signed) JOHN ELLIOTSON, M. D.
Conduit Street, London,
May 9, 1832.

VII.—From Dr HENRY, *Manchester, to the Right Honourable the Lord Provost, the Magistrates, and the Town Council of Edinburgh.*

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

HAVING learned with the deepest regret that the University of Edinburgh is likely to be soon deprived of the services of one of its Professors whom I have known and esteemed for nearly forty years, and having been requested to state my opinion of the qualifications of a gentleman who intends to be a candidate for the office when vacant, I trust that my compliance with that request will not be considered an unbecoming intrusion.

It may perhaps be permitted to me to state, in the first place, my conviction, that the chair about to be vacated is one not only of the highest importance, but demanding for the successful performance of its duties the union of various talents and acquirements. Among these are a sound knowledge of the ge-

neral principles of chemical science, and of the application of those principles to the art of Pharmacy, which furnishes the medical practitioner with some of the most useful instruments of his art. For though it cannot be denied that a physician may often employ with success medicines, of the composition of which he has but an imperfect knowledge, yet it is equally certain that he will be better prepared, by an accurate acquaintance with their nature, to direct and modify their application, and to extend it to new and untried circumstances. But however this may be, it does not admit of a doubt that a *teacher* of *Materia Medica* should be thoroughly informed respecting the history and properties of every object of his department of science,—that he should be able to explain to his pupils the processes for obtaining such as are the results of art, and to imprint those processes on the memories of his hearers by actual exhibition before the class,—that he should be prepared to teach and to display the best methods of scrutinizing the purity of drugs and pharmaceutical preparations, and to unfold the various changes which take place when medicines are mixed with each other, or are brought into contact with the animal fluids,—changes which, in some instances, exalt the activity of medicinal articles, and in others render them totally inert.

It needs scarcely be pointed out that the share taken by the Professor of *Materia Medica* in the delivery of Clinical Lectures, renders it necessary that he should have had due experience in the practical part of medicine; and that he should possess a capacity for attentive and correct observation of the ever-varying forms of diseases, and the habit of drawing and applying sound and legitimate conclusions.

That these qualifications are united in Dr Christison, your present Professor of Medical Jurisprudence and Police, I am fully satisfied by the perusal of his writings, especially of his *Treatise on Poisons*,—a work which I have been in the habit of consulting, as the best source in our language of the kind of information which it professes to afford. This work alone bears unquestionable evidence of his unwearied industry in acquiring, and skill in imparting knowledge, on a subject closely allied to his present duties, and not remotely to those of the chair which he is desirous to obtain.

I shall only add, that the favourable opinion which I have

expressed of Dr Christison's talents and acquirements, is founded entirely on the knowledge of his writings, and is therefore unbiassed by personal esteem.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord and Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

Manchester,

WILLIAM HENRY, M. D.

May 11, 1832.

VIII.—From Dr BOSTOCK, London, to Dr CHRISTISON.

22, Upper Bedford Place,

SIR,

May 9, 1832.

I have heard with great concern of the unfavourable state of my friend Dr Duncan's health, and that, in consequence of it, he feels it necessary for him to resign his Professorship. You, I am informed, are a candidate for his Chair; and, although I have not the pleasure of being personally acquainted with you, I am well acquainted with your publications, and with the nature of your pursuits. The interest which I must always feel in the welfare of the University of Edinburgh, and, I may add, in the progress of Medical Science in general, induce me to address you for the purpose of stating, that, if you think I could by any testimonials, or by any other means, promote your election, it would give me great satisfaction to do so. I am fully sensible how little the recommendations of friends or supporters avail on such occasions; but, in this instance, as I am personally unknown to you, and cannot possibly have any interest in the affair, except what respects the prosperity of the University and the promotion of science, and as my name may possibly be known to some of the parties concerned, as one who has devoted himself to pursuits similar to your own, I conceive that my opinion might have some little weight in this case.

If you agree with me in this view of the subject, I hope that you will not hesitate to make any use of my name that you may think desirable. If you think it necessary to write to me, I shall be most happy to hear from you, and shall with pleasure attend to your suggestions.—I am, &c.

(Signed) J. BOSTOCK.

IX.—*From Dr PARIS, London.**Dover Street, May 10, 1832.*

FEELING, as I ever must do, a very deep interest in the character of the Medical School of Edinburgh, at which I formerly studied, I cannot but express an ardent hope that the vacant chair of Materia Medica will be filled by Dr Christison,—a gentleman to whose merits, not only as an accurate and acute chemist, but as a skilful physician, I can bear my humble testimony. Allow me to observe, that the study of Pharmacology, in its present advanced state, requires for its elucidation a combination of talents which it is not the good fortune of every physician to possess. It is not enough that he shall be acquainted with medicinal articles, he must understand their chemical nature and relations,—and be expert in analyzing them. On the other hand, the mere chemist, however well he may be acquainted with his department, will fail for want of that medicinal knowledge which is the end and object of the study. Those, therefore, who have duly weighed such considerations will at once perceive that the interest of science, as well as the dignity of the University, would be compromised by any arrangement that did not keep in view such an alliance as I have endeavoured to advocate.

(Signed) JOHN AYSTON PARIS, M. D.

X.—*From Dr ROGET, Secretary to the Royal Society of London.**Bernard Street, London,
May 10, 1832.*

I VERY willingly give my testimonial in favour of the extensive knowledge and great ability displayed by Dr Christison in his Treatise on Poisons, for which the profession and the public are much indebted to him ; and beg to state my conviction, that he is eminently qualified for the appointment of Professor of Materia Medica.

P. M. ROGET, M. D.
Sec. R. S.

XI.—*From Sir ASTLEY COOPER, Bart.*

May 11, 1832.

From all I know, or have been able to learn, of Dr Christison, I believe him to be a man of the first science in his department of knowledge, and in the highest degree qualified to fulfil the duties of the situation which he is anxious to obtain.

(Signed) ASTLEY COOPER.

XII.—*From SAMUEL COOPER, Esq. Professor of Surgery in the London University.*

May 11, 1832.

Dr ROBERT CHRISTISON having become a candidate for the Chair of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh, I feel particular pleasure in having the opportunity of expressing my conviction of the very able and superior manner in which he would discharge the duties of the office. The scientific attainments of Dr Christison, as evinced in his publications, appear to me to render him peculiarly well qualified to deliver valuable instructions on the above-mentioned branch of knowledge.

(Signed) SAMUEL COOPER.

XIII.—*From Dr GEORGE GREGORY, Physician to the Small-Pox Hospital, &c. London.*

*31, Weymouth Street,
London, May 11, 1832.*

Dr CHRISTISON is well known to me personally ;—and his writings have made his merits known to every member of the Medical Profession. I consider him peculiarly fitted to fill the Chair of Materia Medica with credit to the University ; and feel persuaded that such an appointment will be hailed with the utmost satisfaction by its numerous *Alumni*, who, though distant from the scene of their education, still retain a lively interest in whatever concerns the welfare and reputation of the University of Edinburgh.

In justice to Dr Christison, I feel it my duty to offer this sincere testimony of his well-earned character.

(Signed) GEORGE GREGORY, M. D.

XIV.—*From Dr CARSWELL, Professor of Morbid Anatomy,
London University, to Dr Christison.*

London, 11th May 1832.

40, Clarendon Street, Clarendon Square.

MY DEAR SIR,

HAVING been informed by one of our friends of your intention of offering yourself as a candidate for the Chair of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh, I take the earliest opportunity of expressing the high opinion which I entertain of your qualifications for discharging the important duties of that situation.

Although I am not aware that you have devoted much of your time to the study of this branch of medicine, I nevertheless feel persuaded, not only from the perusal of your scientific labours, but from the zeal and success with which you have cultivated various physiological and pathological subjects, that in your hands Materia Medica would soon become, in its application to the healing art, of much greater value than it has hitherto been. Nor can I help expressing my belief that the nature of the researches in which you have been engaged, and which have already thrown much light on the nature and influence of several powerful therapeutic agents, qualify you in a particular manner for accomplishing the desirable object to which I have alluded. Of your knowledge of chemistry, and success as a teacher, I need say nothing. These are qualifications which you are known to possess by every one who is conversant with the progress of medical science.—Wishing you every success, believe me,

My Dear Sir, &c.

(Signed) R. CARSWELL.

XV.—*From WILLIAM LAWRENCE, Esq. Surgeon to St
Bartholomew's Hospital, London.*

Whitehall Place, 11th May 1832.

I ENTERTAIN the highest opinion of the talents, zeal, extensive, and varied knowledge of Dr Christison, whose original researches and admirable writings on the most important parts of his own profession have already procured for him, not only

in this country, but in all parts of Europe, and in America, the reputation of one of the most successful cultivators of medical science. His appointment to the Chair of *Materia Medica*, for which his pursuits have rendered him more especially qualified, would be, in my opinion, a just tribute to his meritorious exertions, and a most powerful incentive to their continuance: it would be equally fortunate for the students, and conducive to the reputation of the university.

(Signed) WM. LAWRENCE.

XVI.—*From SIR CHARLES BELL, Surgeon to the Middlesex Hospital, London, to the Right Hon. the LORD PROVOST of Edinburgh.*

MY LORD, 30 Brook Street, 11th May 1832.

I HOPE you will not consider it extraordinary that I should continue to feel an interest in the Medical School of Edinburgh, and feeling so, that I should express my opinion to your Lordship, on the vacancy that is likely to occur from the illness of my respected friend Dr Duncan.

I have lived long enough to have witnessed many elections in different universities and schools, and to have seen the bad results of choosing men who had no predilection for the studies, and had made no advances in the science connected with the subject to be taught. The common apology is, "We have elected a clever man who can turn himself to any thing." But, my Lord, the first effect of this is to damp the zeal of the students. They witness no respect paid to science; and they see that the men who devote themselves to it meet with no support. As to the Professor so elected, he knows to whom he is indebted for his elevation, and looks in the same direction for further advancement, instead of striving to attain it by the cultivation of his particular department.

These reflections, which have occurred to me on twenty different occasions during my life, tempt me at present to entreat your attention to the merits of Professor Christison. I need not enumerate these. It is sufficient, on the public principle which I advocate, that they are great and fully acknowledged. This affords your Lordship an opportunity of rewarding exertions, and holding up an example to youth.

I make no apology for this address, confident that it must be your desire to know the unbiassed opinion of medical men who have the reputation and best interests of their old University at heart.—I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's obedient humble Servant,

(Signed) CHARLES BELL.

XVII.—From Dr E. BARLOW, *Physician to the Bath Hospital.*

Bath, Sydney Place,

May 12, 1832.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just been apprised by Dr Turner of the London University, of your being a candidate for the Professorship of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh,—and that attestations of the estimation in which your talents and acquirements are held by your brethren of the profession would conduce to your success in obtaining the appointment. While I deeply regret the occasion which creates the present vacancy, I cannot hesitate to express my full conviction, that every friend of medical science throughout the kingdom would rejoice at its being filled by you. My personal testimony can be little worth ; but I can represent the opinions of many whose pretensions to judge on such a subject could not be questioned, and, in entire concurrence with them, I can truly say, that the evidences which you have given of profound science, sound judgment, and diligent investigation, have raised you in the estimation of your contemporaries to an eminence such as it is the lot of but few to attain.

With my best wishes that my old *alma mater* may have the full benefit of your talents in the appointment which you seek,

I remain,

Dear Sir, &c.

(Signed) E. BARLOW, M. D.

XVIII.—*From BENJAMIN TRAVERS, Esq. Senior Surgeon to St Thomas's Hospital, London.*

Bruton Street, May 14, 1832.

I have not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with Dr Christison of Edinburgh, but have been long familiar with his professional reputation through the medium of his contributions to medical science, and which evince acquirements and talents that leave no doubt in my mind of his superior fitness to do every justice to the Professorship of Materia Medica, and reflect high credit on the University of Edinburgh.

BENJAMIN TRAVERS.

XIX.—*From EDWARD STANLEY, Esq. Lecturer on Anatomy and Physiology, St Bartholomew's Hospital, London.*

With the sincerest pleasure I add my testimony to the many others Dr Christison will on this occasion receive, of the high professional character he has so deservedly acquired by his labours in various departments of medical science.

During the period of Dr Christison's attendance at St Bartholomew's Hospital, I had the opportunity of witnessing his indefatigable zeal and industry ; and that he possesses the peculiar talents required for the duties of a public teacher, is abundantly proved by his writings, especially by his admirable work on Poisons, on which alone he may be well content to rest his claim to the highest honours of the medical profession.

EDWARD STANLEY.

XX.—*From Dr BROWN, Physician to the Sunderland Infirmary.*

PROFESSOR CHRISTISON's writings are so well known to the medical public, that no professional man, however remote his residence may be from Edinburgh, can feel any difficulty in pronouncing on his fitness to fill the Chair of Materia Medica, for which he is understood to be at present a candidate. The very accurate constitution of his mind, and the extent and correctness of his medical knowledge, would render him an excellent teacher of any branch of medicine ; and the mental disci-

pline he has undergone in the chair which he has for some time filled,—that minute investigation of the properties of certain medicinal agents, and their operation on the human frame, which is required for the successful discharge of the duties of this chair, and which it is notorious to medical men that he has been assiduously and very successfully pursuing, would appear to me, and I should think to the generality of members of the profession, the best possible preparation for the office to which he now aspires.

He has my sincere wishes for his success,—wishes dictated by gratitude to the University of Edinburgh, of which I am an *alumnus*, and consequently by anxiety for its prosperity.

J. BROWN, M. D.

May 16, 1832.

XXI.—*From Dr FORBES, Senior Physician to the Chichester Infirmary.*

PROFESSOR CHRISTISON is so well known by his numerous and very valuable writings,—and his great talents, industry, and various acquirements are so fully appreciated, that I feel assured that, in stating my opinion of his superior fitness for the chair of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh, I only repeat the sentiments of the whole medical profession. I believe that it would be difficult to select an individual better qualified for the office to which Dr Christison aspires; and I am convinced that his obtaining it will add to the present reputation of the University, and be of the greatest advantage to those who may hereafter prosecute their medical studies in that celebrated school.

Chichester,

JOHN FORBES.

May 14, 1832.

XXII.—*From Dr TURNER, Professor of Chemistry in the University of London.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I never sat down to express an opinion of attainments with more pleasure than on the present occasion, when my voice, if

of any avail, will at one and the same time be useful to an esteemed friend, and do an act of service to the University of Edinburgh.

As the members of the Town Council are not of the Medical Profession, and probably possess an imperfect idea of the qualifications required of a Professor of *Materia Medica* by the present state of medical and chemical science, I shall first express my views on that subject. My opinion is, that the chair of *Materia Medica* ought to consist essentially of two departments, each equally prominent;—of the application of chemistry in the preparation of medical substances, or chemical pharmacy,—and of therapeutics. It was formerly quite possible for a Professor of Chemistry to teach his own subject and pharmacy also; but now that, on the one hand, the science of pure chemistry is become so vastly extensive, and on the other, that the most refined processes of analytical chemistry are resorted to in preparing medicinal agents, it is essential that pharmacy should no longer be an appendage to a class of chemistry. We have in this institution found the necessity of acting on this principle; and, accordingly, from the very first have I left the department of Chemical Pharmacy entirely in the hands of my colleague, Dr A. T. Thomson; and it is fortunate I did so, because, although I teach five times a week during seven months, I find the time fully occupied with Chemistry alone. If any other argument were wanting in aid of my mode of viewing this subject, it would be derived from the position of your own University:—With three different chairs, (Medicine, Pathology, and the Institutions of Medicine,) devoted to giving instruction on Physiology and disease, it would be most superfluous to confine the Professor of *Materia Medica* solely or principally to Therapeutics.

I think, therefore, that the Professor of *Materia Medica* ought to possess an excellent knowledge of Physiology and Pathology, combined with an aptitude for exact manipulation in Chemistry;—just such a knowledge, in fact, as is required for doing justice to your present chair, and such as the whole scientific world admits you to be possessed of in a very remarkable degree. The celebrity you have attained as a Toxicologist is owing to this union of qualifications, which are rarely united in

the same individual. It is on this account I consider you as eminently qualified for the Chair of Materia Medica.

With best wishes for your success, I remain,

My Dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD TURNER.

University of London,

May 8, 1832.

XXIII.—*From Dr PRICHARD, Bristol.*

SIR,

Bristol, May 16, 1832.

Although personally unknown to you, I trust that I cannot do wrong in testifying my wish that you may succeed to the medical chair in the University of Edinburgh, which I understand is likely to be vacated.

The University of Edinburgh, having no rich endowments, depends entirely for its prosperity on the wisdom of those who have the selection of its professors; and the fame it has so long enjoyed, is the best proof of judgment and impartiality in the gentlemen who have in former times constituted the selecting body. We have only to hope that their successors are governed by the same principle; and if that be the case, I am of opinion that your nomination to the professorship is secure. There is no individual, unless I am greatly mistaken, among those who are at all likely to offer themselves, and are in circumstances allowing them to hold the office, whose claims are comparable to yours. In venturing to make this assertion, I hesitate not, as I am well aware that I am only expressing the general opinion of the medical profession, at least throughout South Britain.—I remain,

Sir,

Your faithful Servant,

H. PRICHARD, M. D.

ADDITION TO THE EDINBURGH CERTIFICATES.

XIII.—*From* DR HOME, *Professor of the Practice of
Physic, to* DR CHRISTISON.

Cowdenknowes,

May 16, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

Being in the country, I did not receive yours of the 14th till to-day. In this, among other things, you request my sentiments regarding an opinion which you say is now prevalent, that the *Materia Medica* should be considered as purely a course of Therapeutics, and that in teaching it a knowledge of Chemistry is of no consequence. During the twenty-two years I had the honour of occupying the chair of *Materia Medica*, I was so much convinced of the contrary, and of the necessity of conjoining Chemistry with Pharmacy and *Materia Medica*, that I repeatedly applied to the Patrons for accommodation, in order to teach properly this necessary department of *Materia Medica*. But, notwithstanding many applications, I could not obtain the slightest accommodation. In the plan of the new College, however, I took care to get ample space for a cabinet and for a laboratory. This is now attached to the class of *Materia Medica*, and affords every means of teaching Pharmacy and the applications of Chemistry to the *Materia Medica*. I had, however, no opportunity of doing this, which I so long and ardently wished for, having been removed to the chair of the Practice of Physic. But my late worthy and much-lamented successor did most ample justice to this department.

In the present advanced state of Chemistry and of *Materia Medica*, which are intimately conjoined, I consider that it is absolutely necessary that the Professor of *Materia Medica* should possess an intimate knowledge of both these sciences, and espe-

cially of their latest state, not only for the purpose of applying these to Pharmacy, but also for instructing his pupils in the best means of detecting the different qualities, the various adulterations, and the goodness or badness of the articles of the *Materia Medica*.

Now, my dear Sir, allow me, without flattery, to say, that whoever the other candidates may be for the vacant Chair of the *Materia Medica*, of which at this distance I have little opportunity of being informed, I know no person more deeply versed in the science and in the practice of Analytic Chemistry than yourself, which must fit you eminently for teaching that important department of *Materia Medica*. I may mention also, that your *Treatise on Poisons* is materially connected with this department; that it is of first-rate merit, and that it is well known and highly thought of in other countries.

Allow me also to add, that, from a long personal acquaintance with you, I should consider that your appointment to the Professorship of *Materia Medica* would meet the approbation of every man of science, and would add considerably to the reputation of the University of Edinburgh.

With best wishes for your success, believe me to be, &c.

JAMES HOME.

NOTICES IN REVIEWS, &c. OF A TREATISE ON POISONS BY DR CHRISTISON.

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I. *From the announcement of the German translation in Buchner's Repertorium.*

"The work of which we here present the public with a full translation, is one of the greatest additions that has been made to the stores of medical, and especially of medico-legal literature; and we have no doubt that it will receive in Germany the same approbation with which it has been welcomed from all quarters in Britain. While the author has trod in the steps of Orfila, he has turned his attention in the most pointed manner to the phenomena produced by the various poisons in the living and dead body; and the scientific reader will soon be convinced that in these respects he has far overstepped his predecessor."

II. *From the Review of it by M. Vavasseur, Editor of the Archives Générales de Médecine, the chief Medical Journal in France.—[Translation.]*

"Of all the branches of medical jurisprudence, toxicology has undoubtedly made the greatest progress of late years, and has arrived nearest a state of perfection. Zealously cultivated in Germany, and flourishing in France,—thanks to the admirable researches of Orfila, which have corrected numerous errors, and facilitated farther investigations,—this department of legal medicine has nevertheless remained in a backward state in Britain. No work worthy of notice, embracing the subject in all its details, has appeared till now in that country. Dr Christison has for some time devoted himself with ardour to this science. The numerous instances of poisoning in which he has been consulted by the legal authorities, the multifarious and important researches he has undertaken in this field of inquiry, and published in various journals, have acquired for him a well-merited repu-

tation as an accurate and conscientious observer. The work at present under our notice contains the results of these researches and of his experience generally, as well as those of the toxicologists of Germany and France. It is, in our opinion, the first original and essentially practical work on the subject which has appeared in Britain; and after attentively perusing it, we entirely coincide in this respect with all the English reviewers who have taken notice of it."

Extract from a Letter from M. Vavasseur to Dr Christison.
[Translation.]

"If the bookselling trade, which at present is in a very languishing state in France, should recover a little its vigour, I should desire to translate the second edition of your work into French. Even the first edition, which I have read attentively "from the title page to the index," would, in my opinion, be a great boon conferred on my countrymen. I should feel unwilling, however, to take this step, if it do not meet with your approbation. But I beg to suggest that a book such as yours is entirely wanting in our medical literature. The works we possess on the same subject, however great their merit, are not directly practical in their principles and details; and I am not aware that any one here at present purposes filling up this blank, which would be excellently accomplished by a French translation of your treatise. I repeat, however, that I shall take no step without your special approbation."

III. *Extracts from a Review by Dr Duncan, Professor of Materia Medica, in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal for 1830.*

"Legal medicine brings forward in a prominent point of view whatever is certain in physiology, pathology, and *therapeutics*.

"Of the variety of subjects which legal medicine embraces, the science of Toxicology is one of the most important, whether we regard the interest of the individual cases to which it is applicable, or the frequency of their occurrence. Indeed it is surprising, that, until the appearance of Dr Christison's volume, no original work on toxicology has been published in this country. For although the facts upon which it must be founded, and the inductions derived from them, are of all countries, yet

the technical legal process is different in each, and, although the physician has not to interfere with the duties of the lawyer, the kind of evidence admissible in British Courts, which the medical jurist has to cultivate, differs in many respects from that desired in foreign tribunals.

“ But, if our professional literature has long been destitute of a classical work on toxicology, that defect no longer exists, and we scarcely fear to be accused of national prejudice or partiality, when we declare our decided preference of the volume before us, to the most valuable productions of Germany or France. In giving this opinion, we have not the most remote intention of undervaluing the labours of Dr Christison’s predecessors, for without their assistance he could not have produced a work like the present, and he would have merited no praise, if he had added nothing to the information already communicated by them, or in no way improved the scientific exposition of the subject.

“ In a Preface somewhat more substantial than usual, Dr Christison expounds at some length the objects of the science of Toxicology, which is fourfold. It supplies antidotes for the various poisons,—it furnishes the physiologist with valuable instruments of research in his investigations into the laws of the animal economy,—*it aids the physician in his inquiries into the action of many energetic drugs*,—and it collects from the numerous branches of medical knowledge, as well as from collateral sciences, the materials of the most important department of medical jurisprudence, &c.

“ The arrangement which Dr Christison has adopted in treating of each individual poison, is calculated to prevent the omission of any material fact, and to render consultation easy. The general heads are ;—the tests of the various poisons ; the action and symptoms produced in man ; the morbid appearances caused by them ; and the treatment of poisoning by them. To the discussion of each of these topics Dr Christison brings all the varied qualifications required,—consummate skill in the most difficult department of chemical analysis, indefatigable industry in the collection of facts, a severe and critical judgment in estimating their relative value, and in deriving from them general conclusions, and personal experience, greater, perhaps, than has fallen to the lot of any individual in this country.”

IV. *Extract from the London Medico-Chirurgical Review for 1830.*

“ This brings us to the close of the first part of Dr Christison’s book ; the whole of the second part—indeed almost the whole of the work being on “ individual poisons,” many of which we shall notice separately in our Periscope articles. Even what we have brought forward from this, which is little more than an introductory portion of the performance, must produce a favourable impression respecting its merits on the reader, but an examination of the whole will convince him that this is a standard publication ;—one of the most valuable and necessary which he can place in his library—for study in leisure, as well as reference in the hour of emergency, perplexity, doubt—nay danger.”

V. *Extract from Blackwood’s Magazine.*

“ Dr Christison’s great work on poisons, by far the best on Medical Jurisprudence in our language.”

VI. *Extracts from the London Medical and Physical Journal of 1830.*

“ The three works, the titles of which we have prefixed to this article, are important contributions to our toxicological knowledge. The first, which is a complete systematic treatise, is throughout worthy of the author’s previous reputation. Comprising a far more extended literature of the subject than any previous toxicological work can pretend to, it contains, at the same time, more ample details of the effects of poison on man, derived from the author’s medico-legal experience ; for Professor Christison has probably been consulted in a greater number of cases of poisoning, subjected to juridical investigation, than any other British practitioner. The Experimental Essay on Poisoning by Oxalic Acid, published conjointly by Dr Coindet of Geneva, and himself ; and the elaborate and masterly Essay on Arsenic, contained in Vol. ii. of the Transactions of the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Edinburgh, had placed the Professor’s talents for toxicological investigation in a very favourable point of view : and the perusal of the present work will not fail to convince all impartial persons, that the same acuteness of judgment, accurate chemical knowledge, and extensive read-

ing, which the author formerly displayed on isolated branches of toxicology, have been brought, in this treatise, to the elucidation of the science in general.

“ The original chemical details contained in this treatise are particularly valuable, and cannot fail to be most acceptable to practitioners. The author has evinced a thorough practical acquaintance with the methods of detecting *minute* quantities of poisons in *complex* fluids, and has simplified and perfected the methods of analysis previously suggested by Orfila and others. The processes he has related are delicate, conclusive, and easily managed. Some are novel and preferable to any previously proposed, and there is scarcely any, the accuracy of which he has not ascertained by frequent trials, under most difficult circumstances.”

“ Of the importance of toxicology as a science, it is almost superfluous to offer an observation. Independent of the absolute necessity of its cultivation in relation to medical jurisprudence, it has unquestionably supplied the ground-work for an improved theory of the *materia medica*. The *modus operandi* of remedial agents was very imperfectly known prior to the modern investigations of toxicological experimentalists ; and a proof of this assertion may be gathered from a view of the opinions contained in the works of Cullen, and even Murray. The general fact, that agents, however applied, have the same kind of operation on the living body, was formerly unknown ; and the study of their physiological actions has much contributed to illustrate their therapeutic operation. ‘ The study of toxicology,’ says Dr Christison, ‘ has led to the rejection from the practice of medicine of a host of popular remedies, the offspring of empiricism, which were either totally useless or positively prejudicial.’

“ The object of the science of toxicology is fourfold : it supplies antidotes for the various poisons ; it furnishes the physiologist with valuable instruments of research in his investigations into the laws of the animal economy ; it aids the physician in his inquiries as to the action of many energetic drugs, &c.

“ The *treatment* pointed out in the various chapters on the individual poisons, renders the work valuable to the general practitioner ; while to the medical jurist, from the novelty, accuracy, and practical bearing of the facts so copiously collected,

it is indispensable. In short, it is, beyond comparison, the most valuable practical treatise on Toxicology extant."

VII. *Extract from the London Medical Gazette of 1830.*

"We have no hesitation in pronouncing this to be the most important and interesting work on Toxicology which has appeared in the English language; indeed, it is the only one expressly devoted to that subject which has been published for many years; and although poisons have been treated of by various writers on medical jurisprudence, the many questions which their history involves have not been handled in so satisfactory a manner on any former occasion. When we consider that many of our most efficient medicines are in reality poisons, and that their curative effects are but minor degrees of that influence, which, in its more complete developement, is incompatible with life, it requires no other argument to convince the practitioner how essential to a perfect knowledge of his remedies is an acquaintance with their deleterious properties; and if, in addition to this, we call to mind the frequency of assassination and self-destruction by poison, we feel at once how paramount in importance to the well-educated physician is a knowledge of the various subjects comprehended under the name of Toxicology."

EDINBURGH:

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Old Assembly Close.

ADDITIONAL TESTIMONIALS

FOR DR CHRISTISON,

AS CANDIDATE FOR THE CHAIR OF

MATERIA MEDICA.

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XXIV.—*From B. C. BRODIE, Esq. Surgeon to St George's Hospital, London.*

I AM acquainted with many of the important contributions which Dr Christison has made to medical science: they afford evidence of a mind stored with knowledge, and possessed of great powers of research, and I cannot doubt that he is well qualified to fill the chair of a Professor of Materia Medica.

B. C. BRODIE.

14, *Saville Row*, May 15, 1832.

XXV.—*From Dr CLARK, Physician to St George's Infirmary.*

THE scientific character and great practical value of Dr Christison's writings have acquired for their author a very extended and well-merited reputation; and, from the great estimation in which Dr Christison's professional character is held abroad, as well as in this country, I feel assured his appointment to the chair of the late talented Dr Duncan would give great and general satisfaction to the profession. In bearing my own humble testimony to the high professional acquirements of Dr Christison, I feel that I am only performing an act of justice to that gentleman, who is personally unknown to me. I consider him qualified in an eminent degree to fill the chair of Materia Medica in the University of Edinburgh, with increasing reputation to himself, and with credit and advantage to its medical school.

JAMES CLARK, M. D.

Physician to St George's Infirmary.

London, May 18, 1832.

XXVI.—*From Dr CHAMBERS, Physician to St George's Hospital.*

London, 21st May 1832.

I AM well acquainted with Dr Christison's general and professional character, and have no hesitation in stating it to be

my sincere conviction, that his appointment to the vacant chair of *Materia Medica* in Edinburgh would be highly advantageous to the Medical School of that University.

W. F. CHAMBERS, M. D. F. R. S.
Physician to St George's Hospital, &c.

XXVII.—*From Dr JOHNSON, Physician Extraordinary to the King.*

*Suffolk Place, Pall Mall,
London, 15th May 1832.*

I HAVE not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with Dr R. Christison; but, as Editor of a medical journal, I have necessarily become acquainted with his writings and researches, and I have also had opportunities of learning the opinions formed of Dr Christison and his publications in this and in many other countries. Those opinions, in which I perfectly coincide, have been uniformly most flattering to the individual in question, who is considered, both in Europe and America, as one of the most rising and talented members of the medical profession at the present time.

JAMES JOHNSON, M. D.
Physician Extraordinary to the King.

XXVIII.—*From Dr HOLLAND, London.*

THOUGH not personally acquainted with Dr Christison, I feel assurance, from a general knowledge of his writings and researches, that he is eminently qualified for the Chair of *Materia Medica*; the character of these researches having peculiar value in relation to the duties, as well as eminence, of the Professorship in question.

H. HOLLAND, M. D.
London, May 21, 1832.

XXIX.—*From Sir WILLIAM BLIZARD, London.*

London Hospital.

I BEG to bear testimony to the qualifications of Dr Christison for the Professorship of *Materia Medica* in the University

of Edinburgh. His research and judgment, displayed in his various writings, eminently prove his eligibility.

Devonshire Square,

WILLIAM BLIZARD.

May 18, 1832.

XXX.—From Dr SIMS, *Physician to the St Mary-le-bone Infirmary, London.*

FROM my knowledge of Dr Robert Christison's medical writings, I believe him to be a physician of very great talent and extensive acquirements. His Treatise on Poisons is a valuable addition to British medical literature. The patient research and cautious induction which he has displayed in this work eminently qualify him to be an instructor in our profession,—to enlarge the boundaries of medical science,—and to adorn a medical chair in any University.

JOHN SIMS, M. D.

Cavendish Square,
5th Month 20th 1832.

Physician to the
St Mary-le-bone Infirmary.

XXXI.—From HERBERT MAYO, Esq. *Professor of Anatomy, King's College, London.*

ALTHOUGH I have not the pleasure of knowing Dr Christison personally, yet, having been asked by some of his friends to add my testimony to theirs, of his distinguished merit, I am most happy in stating, that, from the very high reputation which Dr Christison enjoys in London, and from my knowledge of his works, upon which that reputation is established, I am persuaded that he is most deserving of the appointment to the chair rendered vacant by the death of Dr Duncan.

HERBERT MAYO.

19, George St. Hanover Sq.
May 18, 1832.

XXXII.—From HENRY EARLE, Esq. *Surgeon to St Bartholomew's Hospital, London.*

I HAVE much pleasure in expressing the opinion which I entertain of the high professional attainments of Dr Christison ;

and particularly of his being eminently qualified for the Professorship of *Materia Medica* in the University of Edinburgh.

George Street,

HENRY EARLE.

May 19, 1832.

XXXIII.—*From the Physicians, Surgeons, and Lecturers of the London Hospital, London.*

London Hospital, May 15, 1832.

WE willingly bear testimony to the high professional character of Dr Christison, and consider that his attainments in medicine and chemistry, as proved by his various writings, eminently qualify him for a Professorship of *Materia Medica*.

Algernon Frampton, M. D.

Fred. Cobb, M. D.

A. Billing, M. D.

Thomas Davies, M. D.

James A. Gordon, M. D.

J. Macbraire, M. D.

John Ramsbotham, M. D.

James Luke.

J. Goldwyer Andrews.

Alfred Hamilton.

John Scott.

John Adams.

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