

Memorial of certain of the medical lecturers in King's College and University, to the ... Senatus of King's College. November 1850 / [William Templeton].

Contributors

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Publication/Creation

[Aberdeen] : [G. Rennie], [1850]

Persistent URL

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MEMORIAL
OF CERTAIN OF
THE MEDICAL LECTURERS
IN
King's College and University,
TO THE REVEREND AND LEARNED
THE SENATUS OF KING'S COLLEGE.
NOVEMBER 1850.

G. RENNIE, PRINTER, 61, BROAD STREET, ABERDEEN.



MEMORIAL, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

WE deem it necessary to bring before you, as we trust for the last time, the subject of the examination of Candidates for Medical Degrees—a matter which you recently had under your view, and which, indeed, we considered to be in consequence put upon a better, although not a satisfactory footing. We find, however, that we have yet to direct our efforts anew to the amendment of grievances, of which we have still the same grounds as ever for complaining. Having found that former attempts in this direction were rendered of greater difficulty, from the defective information of some of your body regarding the Medical affairs of the University, we consider that no apology is needed for the details incorporated in the present memorial.

When the conjoint Medical School of King's and Marischal Colleges was given up, and the present Medical School established in 1839, the Senatus appointed the Lecturers on Practice of Physic, Surgery, and Anatomy, to be examiners of Candidates for the degree of M.D., along with the Professor of Medicine. This unusual arrangement was far from satisfactory to the five Lecturers who were excluded, and has always been looked upon as unjust towards them, influencing unfavourably the character and conduct of the Students, discreditable to the University, and injurious to the reputation of its Medical degree. Remonstrances were made on the subject, but these neither brought about any amendment of the constitution of the Examining Board, nor elicited better arguments for its imperfection, than that

"The diploma should be a certificate of qualification, not of education merely; but, as at present granted, it is liable to be unjustly undervalued by those who may be better aware of the number than the reputation of the Medical Examiners. We are far from underrating their conscientiousness or their efficiency; but unless they examine beyond their special provinces, we hold that the ordeal is an imperfect one, and, if they do, we respectfully object to an assumption of what should be our functions. Medical Boards do not recognise the certificates of one who teaches two separate and distinct branches of the science, and ought not to be satisfied with an inconsistent mode of examining.

"We urge, therefore, for the sake of consistency with ordinary usage, justice to ourselves, and the credit of the University, that the present constitution of the Board of Medical Examiners for Degrees be amended, and that we be appointed fellow-examiners with our colleagues, and upon a perfect footing of equality.

"We beg your best attention to a subject which has been thought of sufficient importance to be brought before you again and again, and which, we regret to say, led but recently to the resignation of the oldest and most experienced teacher connected with the school.

"We subscribe ourselves, with much respect,

"GENTLEMEN,

"Your most obedient Servants,

"G. DICKIE,

"Lecturer on Botany.

"W. TEMPLETON,

"Lecturer on Materia Medica.

"GEO. OGILVIE,

"Lecturer on Institutes of Medicine.

"ROBERT JAMIESON,

"Lecturer on Medical Jurisprudence.

"GEO. RAINY,

"Lecturer on Midwifery."

"ABERDEEN, January, 1849."

In order that the members of the Senatus might have every possible information on the subject, and be led to take more interest in it than they had hitherto done, a deputation of the Lecturers waited upon each of them, and represented the position of the Memorialists, and the changes desired by them. This course was adopted for the reason, also, that some of the individuals composing the body addressed might, from having been but recently appointed to Chairs in the University, be presumed to be but little conversant with a subject now for the first time brought under their notice.

After the lapse of about a month, the following letter was received :—

"KING'S COLLEGE, 10th February, 1849.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I brought the memorial of the Lecturers again before the College this day, and I am now instructed to intimate that the Senatus has agreed to the request therein contained, to this extent :—
'That all the Lecturers at the Medical School shall have the right of examining the Students that come forward for examination, as candidates for the Degree of M.D.'

"In conferring this privilege the Senatus intends that the fees of graduation shall still continue to be paid to the other Examiners, as hitherto ; and that these Examiners shall still continue to be the only Examiners of Practitioners who come from a distance.

"The Senatus also wishes that this regulation shall not be put in force (at least in so far as examination is concerned) till the Students of the next Session come forward.

"Yours truly,

"Dr. RAINY."

"Aw. FYFE."

To this communication the following reply was sent :—

"ABERDEEN, 27th February, 1849.

"DEAR SIR,—I am instructed by my colleagues who lately transmitted a memorial to the Senatus, to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 10th inst., which will be duly considered.

"Yours very truly,

"Dr. FYFE."

"GEO. RAINY."

The Lecturers having again met, and taken Dr. Fyfe's letter into consideration, authorized their Secretary to embody their acceptance of the proffered conditions, in the following terms :—

"ABERDEEN, 26th March, 1849.

"DEAR SIR,—As Secretary, I beg to intimate that my colleagues have agreed to accept of the right conferred by the Senatus of examining the Students who may come forward as candidates for the degree of M.D. after the current year. They feel much disappointed, however, that all the claims mentioned in their memorial were not acceded to, as they consider themselves entitled to equal privileges with the other Lecturers.

"Yours very truly,

"Dr. FYFE."

"GEO. RAINY."

Thus were these Lecturers at length appointed Examiners with their colleagues, although on a footing that but little improved their case. They were not to examine any

candidates who were not students at the school—the students coming forward being to the other candidates as one in ten. They were not to be paid for examining, as their colleagues were still to be, but were to do the work for the honour and satisfaction of doing it. They were not to exercise their new vocation at the immediately succeeding graduation term, nor at the following one, but at the term subsequent to that; that is to say, not until the end of the session of 1849-50, or about sixteen months after the date of their memorial, while they were still, however, to submit cheerfully to be annually assessed to the same amount as their more fortunate brethren for the general expenses of the School—in this particular there was always a most impartial equality.

Such are the facts which require to be set forward, as an introduction to the representation which we have now to make, regarding the way in which the College has fulfilled its agreement.

Since the above arrangement was concluded, some changes have taken place in our body. One of the paid Examiners has thrown up his office of Lecturer, and the University, instead of calling on one of his unpaid colleagues to occupy the post of Examiner, as was looked for and expected, has chosen to advance the newly appointed Lecturer to the duty also of examining. Two of those who memorialized you on the last occasion, have since then been promoted to teach in other Schools of Medicine. One of the vacancies thus occasioned still remains to be supplied.

When the time indicated in Dr. Fyfe's letter at length came round, namely, the graduation examination of April, 1850, we received, to our surprise, no intimation whatever, either private or official, but thought it unnecessary to take any notice of this, as we had reason to suppose that none but practitioners from a distance had offered themselves for examination. We found afterwards, from the published list of graduates, that we were right in this supposition. The next examination of Candidates took place at the conclusion of the Summer Session of the present year, in the end of July. Still no intimation was sent to us as Examiners, although now we observed the names of Students in the published list of Medical Graduates.

What is the result of our endurance of an injurious arrangement for more than ten years, and of all our temperate and respectful remonstrances against it from time to time? A refusal of what we most desired, and an unexplained breach of the conditions which we condescended to accept—compelling us to declare, as we hereby do, that we now withdraw our assent to an agreement which has not been implemented, and will not acquiesce in the renewal of terms so unsatisfactory to us, and so discreditable to all parties.

What is there in the constitution of the present Board of Examiners so admirable or advantageous as to justify the course adopted towards us? We do not remark that it is approved of by any one; perhaps, not even by those who might be presumed to be interested in its continuance. It is condemned by public opinion, in a way which it would be unbecoming of us to imitate; its imperfection has been commented upon in the medical press, and amongst professional men, we have reason to know that there is but one voice of disapproval.

We shall notice merely one of the objections which we have heard stated to an improvement of the system, which we select because it has often been adduced, as if it were of itself a sufficient and unanswerable reason for all the injustice which we feel that we have suffered. It is this: that the sum of money received in examination fees will not bear to be divided among a greater number than the present recipients. During the last year we have reason to think that £1000 and upwards have been paid by the University's Graduates for Medical Diplomas, and more than £500 divided in the shape of examination fees. You, who awarded to us as a privilege the right of examining for nothing, cannot seriously entertain the notion that a less sum than the above would be quite inadequate as a remuneration to those whose labour we should tend to lessen.

Upon the grounds, then, which have been so often advanced, and which need not be recapitulated, we must beg leave again respectfully to urge upon you, to do us the long delayed justice of placing us on the same footing as our Colleagues. We are not content with our present position of non-examiners; we will not agree again to be made examiners of Students merely, nor to examine for nothing

while our Colleagues are not expected to do the same. We must also respectfully insist, that, if the prayer of our Memorial is granted, we shall not be, as formerly, referred to a distant date for the assumption of our right, but be allowed to take immediate advantage of our improved position.

We have the honour to remain,

GENTLEMEN,

Your obedient, humble Servants,

WM. TEMPLETON,

Lecturer on Materia Medica.

ROBERT JAMIESON,

Lecturer on Medical Jurisprudence.

GEO. RAINY,

Lecturer on Midwifery.

JOHN CHRISTIE,

Lecturer on Institutes of Medicine.