

## LETTER FROM PROFESSOR FERRIER.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE

LORD PROVOST, THE MAGISTRATES & TOWN COUNCIL  
OF THE CITY OF EDINBURGH;

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

The evidence is now in your hands on which the several Candidates for the CHAIR of LOGIC and METAPHYSICS rest their claims: the day of election is drawing near. In these circumstances, I feel assured that, while all of you are ready to permit, some of you are disposed to invite us to lay before you—with the view of facilitating your adjudication—a condensed statement, exhibiting what each of us conceives to be the strong points of his case. Presuming, then, on your indulgence, whether in the form of permission or of invitation, I shall take the liberty of addressing to you a few words, in which I shall endeavour to point out, as impartially as I can, the grounds on which I venture to solicit your suffrages.

As the evidence before you is presented, for the most part, in the form of Testimonials, it is of these principally that I have to speak. Some of the adherents of one of my worthy rivals have

requested you to be extremely suspicious of all attestations except those which they themselves have bestowed, or which favour the Candidate whose interests they are anxious to promote. This is an example which I do not intend to imitate, just as I am sure that it is a piece of advice which you will reject. I fully and firmly believe that your honourable Board will act impartially in this matter, and will allow—as it should—their full weight to the Testimonials of every Candidate. It is quite true, that on occasions like these, a man's friends (whatever they may say at other times) are exceedingly prone to speak well of him—perhaps even to exaggerate his merits. And on this ground it might be argued, with some show of reason, that too great stress ought not to be laid on Testimonials. But why the friends of any one Candidate in particular should enjoy exemption from an infirmity which, they allege, besets the friends of all the other competitors, it is very difficult to understand. One naturally asks—how or where did these favoured individuals obtain their special dispensation from the failing of over-partiality which they impute so liberally to others? The plea, so far as I can see, rests on no grounds, either of logic or metaphysics. That my opponent, Mr Scott (who, I am sure, is not aware of his exclusive good luck in having such an immaculate cloud of witnesses), is worthy of all, and more than all, the commendation which has been expressed by his well-wishers, is what every Candidate in the field would be most ready to admit; but that certain of his admirers should come forward, representing themselves and their companions as miracles of good faith, and the supporters of his rivals as mere “manufacturers of the article” (certificates, to wit),—this is a proceeding which might almost be termed indecorous, but for the solemnity with which it is gone about,—and ungracious, but for the rare simplicity of the appeal, which is a sufficient antidote to its assumption.

I have thought it necessary to touch on this topic, because, had I not done so, I should have felt that I was making but a poor return to the distinguished friends who have honoured me

with their support. I will not permit, without challenge, any aspersion, or even insinuation, to be thrown out against the truthfulness and sincerity of these men. Hence it is that I have taken this public opportunity of making these remarks; and I feel justified in having made them. But I have said enough. There are one or two other topics connected with testimonials in general, and with my own in particular, to which I pass on as better worthy of your consideration, and to which your attention may be reasonably requested.

I am humbly of opinion that the value of testimonials is entirely determined by these two circumstances—the position and competency of the granters, and the nature and relevancy of the facts which they certify.

In reference to the first of these considerations, I venture to remind you that in my list of supporters are to be found many names which are *great* names—names of the highest celebrity in literature and science, and whose authority, in any matter which they attest, no unprejudiced human being would ever dream of calling in question. On this point I fearlessly court comparison with the lists of any of my esteemed rivals for your favour.

The other consideration is one which enters more deeply into the merits of the case. The relevant facts which require to be thoroughly ascertained in a competition of this kind, and to which the Electors are bound to look as essential tests or proofs of competency for such a Chair, seem to be these two, and not more than these two—first, A Candidate's reputation in Authorship on subjects proper to the Chair; and, secondly, His success and soundness in teaching Philosophy. That the appointment of a Candidate not possessing, or not certified to possess, both the one and the other of these qualifications, would be a rash and hazardous experiment, is an assertion which, I presume, will not be disputed; and I respectfully submit, that the preference of the

Electors for any particular Candidate must be determined by the degree in which they are satisfied that these two points are established by that Candidate's certificates.

The first of these points is attested—and attested, I venture to say, in no stinted measure—by my supporters. My reputation as an author—such as it is—is vouched for by Brewster, Bulwer, Lockhart, Alison, Hamilton, Morell, Tennyson, Warren, Forster, Grote, Thompson, Grant, Mansel, Blackie, Lushington, Tulloch, Gordon, Chambers, De Quincey, Aird, Neaves, Moir, Inglis (Dean of the Faculty of Advocates), M'Neill. While all of these names are of unimpeachable authority, many of them are of the very highest distinction in the literature, philosophy, and scholarship of the country—an important consideration, which the Electors are again respectfully requested not to lose sight of.

The second point—my success and soundness as a Teacher. My aptitude for dealing with the business of a philosophical class is established—and, as I again venture to think, as strongly established as it could well be—by the attestations of the following gentlemen, most of whom have been eye and ear witnesses of what they certify:—Brewster, Haldane, Hetherington, Swinton, Cook, Buist, Duncan, Day, Jackson, Brown, Pyper, Sellar, Berry, Taylor, Grant, Blackie, Tulloch, Students.

I may be absolved from abridging or quoting anything which these—my too partial friends, as I must admit them to be—have said in my favour on either of the points to which your attention has been directed. If you have any doubts as to the comparative strength and conclusiveness of the testimony, I beg you again to peruse the documents themselves, with an eye in particular to the considerations on which their value depends—namely, the celebrity of the vouchers, and the facts which they bear witness to—these being the Candidate's distinction as an Author, and his success as a Teacher in the department of Metaphysical science.

Such, my Lord and Gentlemen, is a short summary of the position in which I stand before you. I have represented my case in its best, but, I think, in no unfair aspect—and I now leave the issue in your hands.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,

Your very obedient Servant,

J. F. FERRIER.

EDINBURGH, 8th July 1856.

## SUPPLEMENTARY TESTIMONIALS.

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### I.

From THOMAS AIRD, Esq., Author of "Poems," and  
"Religious Characteristics."

DUMFRIES, *June 17, 1856.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I need scarcely say to you that, alike for your own sake and that of our Metropolitan University, it would give me profound satisfaction to see you elected to the Chair for which you are now a Candidate.

Among my philosophical friends I have found a difference of opinion as to some of the leading propositions in your "Institutes of Metaphysic;" but we are always at one as to the linked consecutiveness of your deductions, and that peculiar vividness of conception which enables you to present the most abstract propositions as clearly as if they were diagrams. Your method of arranging and presenting them is altogether original. I cannot refrain from adding an expression of my own special wonder at that consummate fulness, yet severe parsimony, of your manifold illustrations, which make them almost more than ancillary to the presentment of truth—something like a necessary part of that presentment itself. In no department of philosophy or literature have I met an economy of illustration so beautifully precise. At this, however, I should express no

wonder : In all your essays in the cognate and collateral fields of literary criticism, &c., those who know the general movement of your mind can easily detect a certain philosophic largeness and scientific basis, which betray you ; and it is almost necessary that a literature mastered by such a habit of mind should be the prompt and precise servant of the habit in its more peculiar exercises.

Will you permit me to add, as my own expectation and that of all your friends here, that now having completed your philosophic scheme, with ampler resources of scholarship and literary accomplishment, you will grow to still higher distinction in that faculty of free and eloquent exposition, and that sympathetic power of inspiring enthusiasm in youth, which complete the function of an academic teacher.

I have the honour to be,

Your very faithful Servant,

THOMAS AIRD.

MR PROFESSOR FERRIER.

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## II.

From W. H. THOMPSON, Fellow of Trinity College, Professor of Greek in the University of Cambridge, and Editor of "Butler's Lectures on the History of Ancient Philosophy."

June 24, 1856.

DEAR SIR,—I beg to thank you most sincerely for the honour you have done me in sending me the second edition of your work on Metaphysics. Absence from England upon a distant tour has prevented me from acknowledging your present, or replying to your letter ; and the same cause makes me ignorant whether the distinguished appointment you seek is, or is not,

filled up. Should you have been the successful Candidate, I should think the University of Edinburgh a subject for warm congratulation. Should the judgment of the electors be still pending, I can only say that your appointment would, as I conceive, be hailed with satisfaction by all competent judges. I say this not as a mere compliment, or in deference to general opinion, but as one who has read your first edition with admiration and delight.

I have the honour be,

DEAR SIR,

Yours faithfully,

W. H. THOMPSON.

