

Register, Nov. 11/11

Register, Nov. 13/11

THE GLACIAL CONTROVERSY.

To the Editor.

Sir—As Fritz Noetling is not an M.D. of any German university, it is difficult for him to understand the requirements of the M.D. in Germany. As stated in my previous letter, I am an M.D. of Gottingen, and very proud of it. Moreover, I am allowed to practise in Gottingen, which is the university town of Hanover, and as all universities in Germany are affiliated, I cannot understand Noetling's statement that the M.D. of Gottingen or any other German university does not give the licence to act as a medical practitioner. One would infer from Fritz Noetling that any German M.D., especially that of Gottingen, could be obtained easily—just by asking; if he thinks so, let him try. The day I qualified two Germans, who had passed the Staats-examen (the Government requirement) failed to obtain their M.D. degrees, and as this was the second attempt on the part of one, he, therefore, lost all his opportunity of securing this coveted honour, as only two chances are given to a student. Fritz Noetling is evidently confusing some of the bogus degrees that used to be conferred in America with the genuine ones that are given in Germany. As a former student in Adelaide, Melbourne, London, Cambridge, Berlin, Strassburg, Gottingen, and Paris, I can confidently affirm that Gottingen was the hardest and most exacting university I ever studied at. The M.D. is not an "ornamental handle;" otherwise several Australians, including two Germans and many English and Americans who, to my knowledge, studied there, with the express desire of securing it, would have now possessed it. Fritz Noetling says "it is the work that maketh the man, and not a string of letters afore and aft his name." In this I totally agree; it is the work, and very hard work, that maketh the M.D. of Gottingen or of any other university. Towards the close of his letter, he says, "I could put almost the whole alphabet behind my name and a good number of letters in front of it." I would like to ask Fritz Noetling, in the face of this, how he can possibly harmonize these two statements. I can endorse all Dr. Henry has said. He is totally disinterested in this matter, besides being a scholar of very high attainments. As regards his advising Australian medical students to go to Germany and get their degrees in three years time, unless the student can show a five-year course of medical study, this is impossible, as Germany, as well as England, demands a five-years' course. I strongly urge all Australians who have the means to go to Germany, and select Gottingen as their university, where they will meet with a most cordial welcome, besides having the good fortune to study at the spring of medical knowledge.

I am, Sir, &c.,

E. ANGAS JOHNSON, M.D. Ch.D., Gottingen. Adelaide, November 10.

To the Editor.

Sir—With sorrow and disgust have I read some of the correspondence appearing in your valued paper under the heading "The Glacial Controversy." I believe this is the first and I hope the last time where a German, and a university man at that, tries to belittle the scientific standing of the German Universities and the degrees conferred by them. However, I am glad that the writer is "simple Fritz Noetling," as he wishes to be designated, late of Konigsberg, in Prussia, and of the Geological Department in Calcutta, India. Poor little Fritz, as we would say in Germany, claims with all his assumed modesty to be a man of scientific training and attainments, but fails to give the first proof of a scientifically trained mind, namely to confine himself strictly to the subject under discussion. What on earth has geology to do with German medical degrees and qualifications? Is not this so-called glacial controversy only a pretext for a miserable and ignoble attempt to vituperate, belittle, and ridicule a better man than himself? However, Dr. Basedow is too well known in Adelaide to require a champion. As a M.D. of Gottingen, I will therefore only follow the splendid example set by Drs. Henry and Angas Johnson in defending the shamefully assailed honour of our glorious Alma Mater. Some of the statements of "simple Fritz Noetling" are absolutely without foundation and not based on facts. First of all, may I ask him what qualifications he possesses to pose as a final arbiter of the value of German medical degrees? I understand that he has never belonged to any medical faculty, neither as an undergraduate nor graduate. In his letter of October 18 he says "that a student who has passed the 'Physicum' can obtain an academic degree on submitting a thesis." I defy him to name a single German university where this can be done. Again, I should be extremely sorry if any Australian medical student should take "Fritz Noetling's" advice and go to Germany hoping to take his M.D. degree after three years of study. Both these statements are

wrong, and a man who makes them can hardly know much about German medical degrees or qualifications. Is "Fritz Noetling" prepared to give us the names of the German scientists who support him; also the names of the writers of the letters received by him in connection with this controversy, so that we may be able to judge for ourselves of the qualifications of these people to give an opinion on German medical degrees and qualifications? What is now really required to obtain the German M.D. degree? Any foreign candidate who wishes to take the German degree has to prove to the satisfaction of the board of examiners of the university where he wishes to take such a degree that he has passed, either in his country or in Germany—the matriculation examination entitling him to study medicine at a recognised university or medical college; (2) has passed through a regular graded course of study of medicine and surgery at a recognised university or medical college of not less than five years' duration; (3) has studied for some time at the university where he intends to take his degree. The regulations referring to the Examen Rigorosum for obtaining the M.D. degree and which for Prussia, for instance, are issued by the Prussian Minister of Education, state distinctly that this examination is to be conducted in the same way as the State examen. The candidate has to pass in the following subjects:—1, anatomy; 2, physiology; 3, pathological anatomy; 4, general pathology; 5, hygiene; 6, bacteriology; 7, clinical medicine; 8, clinical and operative surgery; 9, obstetrics; 10, gynecology. In addition the candidate has to write a thesis which, of course, must be accepted by the faculty, "in order to prove that he is able unaided to undertake scientific research work," as the regulations say. Verily, any one who passes such a stiff examination can look upon his M.D. degree as a well-deserved "ornament" of which he may justly be proud. To return to my dear old University of Gottingen, permit me, Sir, to mention a few facts to show further the value of the Gottingen M.D. Professor Merkel, whom Dr. Angas Johnson rightly calls one of the greatest living anatomists, is "only" a M.D. of Gottingen. Then again, my late teacher and friend His Excellency Professor Robert Koch, the world-known German scientist and bacteriologist, was also a M.D. of Gottingen. Truly we Gottingen men have every reason to be proud of some of our graduates, and therefore of our university, which is known, beloved, and honoured wherever English is spoken. If "simple Fritz Noetling" were right in his assertion that the German M.D. degree is only an ornamental handle to a name, how is it that the Prussian Government, for instance, makes it compulsory for any medical man, who wishes to pass the "Physikats-Examen" in order to become a Government medical officer as health officer, to take first his M.D. degree? Finally, I am glad to be able to agree with "Fritz Noetling" on one point at least—those who truly know him, know indeed how to value him at his work.

I am, Sir, &c.,

J. R. KELMAN.

M.D., &c. (Gottingen University), Grand Central Hotel, Adelaide, November 10, 1911.

THE GLACIAL CONTROVERSY.

To the Editor.

Sir—As Dr. Angas Johnson and Dr. J. R. Kelman have so promptly and adequately replied to Dr. Fritz Noetling, little remains for me to add. Dr. Fritz Noetling replies to three questions (in The Register of November 10) in answer to my letter of October 28. I am sure I never asked that gentleman for any information, but preferred to quote facts. Dr. Noetling has now publicly admitted that he is an applicant for the position of Government Geologist in South Australia, and that explains the whole situation in a nutshell, since he has in a "scientific debate" introduced extraneous matter for purposes which seem to be sufficiently obvious. Dr. Noetling then says that I quoted from "some very out-of-date rules," and that I "might have informed the public that no German subject can take the M.D. degree unless he had previously passed the Staats-examen." I quoted from the most recent information available, viz., the Prussian University regulations of 1905. I could not have informed the public in the way Dr. Noetling suggests, because a subclause of the very rule referred to by Dr. Noetling makes provision for such in exceptional cases. German students who have distinguished themselves in their academic career may sit for their M.D. without previously passing the Staatsexamen. One brilliant German student who enjoyed this privilege is well known in Australia—Professor H. Klaatsch, M.D. (Berlin), the famous anatomist and anthropologist, and favourite student of Gegenbaur. Dr. Noetling's letter of November 10 is quite a different tale from his of October 27. In that he belittled Dr. Basedow's high qualifications and character, and devoted much space to it. Now that at least two of the profession (who happen to be conversant with facts) have conclusively proved to the public how unjust were Dr. Noetling's unfounded attacks, he calmly tries to tell us that "all he contended was that Dr. Basedow is not a legally qualified medical practitioner in Germany." Surely it did not need all those columns to tell us this. Dr. Noetling is avoiding the question. Australia is not a German dependency, consequently it matters little whether Dr. Basedow can practise in Germany or not. I personally possess the highest of British qualifications, but can no more practise in Germany than most of the British and Australian practitioners. Dr. Basedow has never claimed that privilege. What would it be to him? He is not a German subject, any more than his late illustrious relative, Professor Max Muller, of Oxford. He is an Australian-born, and the son of an honoured and respected citizen, the late Hon. M. P. F. Basedow, who for nearly a quarter of a century was held in the highest esteem by the people of South Australia as a legislator and a Minister of the Crown. I understand that Dr. Basedow went to Gottingen to continue his studies with the advice and recommendation of a number of our Adelaide professional men, including Dr. J. C. Verco, Dr. E. Angas Johnson, Dr. R. E. Pulleine, and Professor Watson. He was therefore well advised. If Dr. Basedow possesses many and varied qualifications (to which Dr. Noetling somewhat contemptuously refers), honour to him and South Australia. When a man spends a decade of his life at hard and strenuous study, he deserves not only the university honours which he has legitimately worked for, but also public appreciation and respect.

I am, Sir, &c.,

ALEX. HENRY, M.D., C.M. (Edin.).

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GOVERNMENT GEOLOGIST.

The CHIEF SECRETARY informed the Hon. J. Cowan that the Government had not yet made an appointment of any person as Government Geologist.