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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE EDITOR AND GENERAL SECRETARY TO
37, RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON.

THE RECENT ELECTION OF PHYSICIANS TO THE NORTHAMPTON INFIRMARY.

On Saturday, August 4th, a largely attended meeting of the Governors of the Northampton Infirmary was held, for the purpose of electing two physicians in the room of Dr. Robertson and Dr. Kerr, who had resigned. The account of the proceedings, given in the *Northampton Herald* of August 11th, presents some points of interest, from the fact that two gentlemen who were strangers to Northampton obtained the preference over a resident physician in the town (Dr. Faircloth), and that the mode of election differed from that which is usually followed in this country.

It appears that, on the occasion to which we refer, there were five candidates for the vacant offices; viz., Drs. Francis, Webster, Faircloth, Bell, and Smith. The statutes declare a majority of the whole number of votes shall be necessary for the election of any one gentleman. The first ballot, therefore, does not necessarily decide the election. Dr. Francis obtained a large majority on the first ballot, but not sufficient to satisfy the requirement of the statute. The candidate lowest on the poll (Dr. Smith) was therefore struck off, and a second ballot taken. Dr. Francis increased his majority on the second poll, but, being seven or eight votes below the requisite number, a third ballot was taken, the candidate lowest on the poll (Dr. Bell) being previously struck off. The third ballot was decisive.

Subjoined is a statement of the number of votes obtained by each candidate at the first election—that of a successor to Dr. Robertson.

Name.	1st ballot.	2nd ballot (Smith struck off).	3rd ballot (Bell struck off).
Francis	258	311	422
Faircloth	119	121	100
Webster	99	117	80
Bell	109	87	—
Smith	69	—	—

The proceedings of the election of a successor to Dr. Kerr are thus described.

"The first ballot shewed the following result:—

Webster, 260 | Faircloth, 140 | Bell, 120 | Smith, 94

"Dr. Smith was again struck off, and the ballot was again proceeding, when

"R. L. BEVAN, Esq., on behalf of Dr. Faircloth, announced Dr. Faircloth's withdrawal from the contest.

"This announcement created considerable confusion, some progress having already been made with the ballot.

"Rev. H. DE SAUSMAREZ thought that, on account of Dr. Faircloth's withdrawal, the election should be decided by the numbers of the previous ballot.

"Mr. LITCHFIELD thought they should either go on or begin *de novo*. [Cries of 'Go on'.]

"The CHAIRMAN thought that to go on would be to leave the other candidates in an unfair position. The better way would be that the polling should take place anew.

"Mr. EDMONDS objected to that course, as, since the commencement of the second ballot, some of Dr. Webster's friends had gone away, under the impression that the election was over.

"The CHAIRMAN said it would not be a complete election if they were to go on now. People had voted for Dr. Faircloth; he had withdrawn, and the Governors had no right to force him to keep on.

"Col. CARTWRIGHT remarked that no Governor had a right to go away, and consider the election over, until the ballot-box was closed.

"The CHAIRMAN proposed to take the sense of the meeting as to whether they should go on with the poll, or go to a new poll.

"Lord SOUTHAMPTON suggested that the better proposition to submit to the meeting would be, 'that this poll be withdrawn'.

"The CHAIRMAN acquiesced, and put the motion in that form, when there appeared—

For withdrawing the poll 68

For going on with the poll 70

"It was then decided to proceed with the poll—it being understood that the votes given for Dr. Faircloth should not be taken into account. When the ballot-box was closed, the numbers stood thus:—

Webster, 439 | Faircloth, 160 | Bell, 55

"Dr. Webster was hereupon declared elected as successor to Dr. Kerr."

The system of requiring an absolute majority in the ballot is rarely followed in this country; but it is that which is pursued in elections in the Academies of Medicine and Science in Paris, and in other foreign institutions. This mode appears somewhat tedious; but it may possibly possess advantages. We refer to it on the present occasion rather as a matter of fact than as a subject for extended comment.

One event more, which occurred during the proceedings, deserves notice.

"The Rev. F. LITCHFIELD said that so little was known of the candidates by distant Governors, that it might serve to guide many of them in their course to know what were the religious opinions of the candidates. He should like to propose, therefore, that the Chairman be requested to ask each candidate, prior to the ballot, whether he was a member of the Church of England? [*Hear, hear, and No, no.*]

"R. A. CARTWRIGHT, Esq., seconded the motion. They must all feel the importance of electing physicians who were members of the Church of England."

As if the sciences of pathology and therapeutics had for their essential basis the Thirty-Nine Articles! The absurd proposal of Mr. Litchfield was, very properly, rejected.