THE LIBRARY
OF THE OSLER CLUB OF LONDON

On 16 January 1975 the Osler Club of London held its 300th meeting at the Royal College of Physicians, and the occasion was marked by an exhibition of Osleriana drawn from the collections of the Club and the College. One of the items shown was a slim quarto volume, half-bound in black niger, with the simple legend on its spine “W.O. to G.K.” A recent gift to the Club from Sir Geoffrey Keynes, it consists principally of letters from Osler to him which are concerned with his proposed bibliographies of Sir Thomas Browne and John Evelyn; but it does include one or two others which relate to the founding of the Club. For example A.W. Franklin and W.R. Bett wrote on 27 March 1928 of “the pleasant memory of a delightful pilgrimage to the ‘Open Arms’ and to Bodley which has crystallized into the foundation of a Club for the bio-bibliographical study of the history of medicine to be known of course as the Osler Club and to keep green the memory of Osler.” The Club was launched a month later when six medical students met at 27 Wimpole Street with Charles Singer and Dr. Malcolm, then curator of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, for a Pasteur evening.

Since the Club was quite informal it is not surprising that there is no record of any decision to form a library, although there are clues as to its existence. A terse note in the Minute Book reads: “12 July 1930. The Secretary and Librarian’s and the Foreign Secretary’s report were presented.” These were Dr. White Franklin and Dr. W.R. Bett, but the former never admitted to being Librarian, although the books were kept in his parents’ house until it was burned in 1935. Fortunately, little damage was done, although some papers were scorched; after this the collection was moved to St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, where it was kept in the gallery of the Charterhouse Branch Library, which had previously been the headmaster’s study of the Merchant Taylor’s School. The first book to be bought was *International Beiträge zur Geschichte der Medizin* (Wien, 1928) a festschrift published in honour of the sixtieth birthday of Max Neuburger, professor of the history of medicine in Vienna. Bought in January 1929, it was also the first book to be bound by the Club, possibly due to the need to provide something more substantial than the original paper covers. The book was displayed at its January meeting together with the medal struck in Neuburger’s honour. Five months later the Club was given the copy of Sir William Osler’s Harveian Oration, *The growth of truth* (1906), which had been specially bound for Lady Osler.

One of those who came under the influence of Osler and was associated with him in a study of the writings of Vesalius and other early anatomists was Dr. W.W. Wagstaffe (1886-1929). When he died the Club bought some of his Osleriana, and, of course, it had all the available W.O. reprints from 13 Norham Gardens. Right from the start the Club had had an annual oration. The third in 1930 was given by Harvey Cushing who after his oration gave the Club two significant items. One was his own copy of Friswell’s *Varia. readings from rare books* (London, 1866); it was the essay on Sir Thomas Browne in this book which first introduced Osler to *Religio medici*. The other was the sketch-book, *c. 1864-71*, of Revd. W.A. Johnson, the founder and warden of Weston, the school which Osler attended from 1866 to 1867. He was an artist and a Canadian White of Selborne. This sketch-book was entrusted to the Club with the proviso that it should be handed over to the lost son of Johnson should he be found. Of the items so far mentioned only the sketch-book is to be found in the library today, unless some signed reprints in boards are survivors. For, apart from a few books on loan, the whole library, which occupied about five shelves in a glazed case, was totally destroyed when the Charterhouse Library was blitzed during the War.

Since there was no catalogue or other record the only clue to what has survived from the original library comes either from the plain bookplate with the words “From the Library of the Osler Club” — a not altogether reliable guide — or more certainly from the accessions register started by John Thornton, the first librarian after the War. Such items are described as being a “survivor of the original library”. Twelve items are so described; four are written or contain pieces written by Osler, three might come under the heading of Osleriana, the remainder are on medical history. One other item, I feel sure, should be included here, and that is Sir Geoffrey Keynes’ *Bibliography of Sir Thomas Browne*, which is no. 1 of 500 copies and must surely be the copy solicited by W.R. Bett in the letter previously referred to announcing the formation of the Club. In which case it must have been the first book in the library.

The Osler Club of London was founded in 1928. Last April it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary at a special meeting in Oxford. In this the Club’s semi-centennial year, the Editorial Committee is happy to be able to publish an account of the Club’s library. The author is Mr. Leonard Payne, formerly Librarian of the Royal College of Physicians of London and now Honorary Librarian of the Osler Club of London.
Of the four items by Osler, An Alabama student (2nd ed. 1926) was a gift from the publisher, H.S. Milford; Inculubula medica and Evolution of modern medicine were gifts of John Fulton. The latter had been bought from Blackwell's and given to the Club on 18 November 1928. It had previously belonged to Sir Herbert Warren (1853-1930), one time Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and president of Magdalen College. When he resigned his presidency, his library was sold to Blackwell's in September 1928. This same copy is inscribed “From Grace R. Osler 24 March Oxford” and the presumption is that it was a gift to Sir Herbert on publication. A copy of Hardwick's Science Gossip, 1869 was a gift from A.W. Franklin “with hearty congratulations on the attainment of a second birthday, Apr. 30, 1930.”

John Thornton probably owed his appointment as Club librarian to his suggesting, after the War and after the re-founding of the Club in 1947, that having six books from the original library he should try to build up a new collection. This he did by writing to everybody he could think of who might be able to help — people who wrote about Osler, writers of papers delivered at meetings of the Club, and he also solicited historical books written by members of the Club, but with very little response. The scope of the library was defined, perhaps for the first time, and set out in the list of members some twenty years ago. It reads: “We aim to collect everything by or about Sir William Osler, and also books and reprints of medical historical interest. Members of the Osler Club are invited to send copies of their own books and reprints devoted to the history of medicine, and to consider the Osler Club library when disposing of duplicates from their private collections. At present it contains some books and reprints by Sir William Osler; biographical items devoted to him; a few volumes of medico-historical interest, and about 4000 reprints mainly devoted to the history of medicine. It also contains photographs of Osler, and cuttings, etc. relating to him. Members have helped rebuild the collection, Dr. E.B. Krumbhaar being outstandingly generous.” Many of the books and articles by Osler come from this source. Since there was no regular or occasional allocation of funds for the library, it had to rely on gifts for its growth. The accession register does, however, show the occasional purchase. Eight items were bought from Dr. Bett for £5 in 1960. The following year 32/- was paid for W.B. Bean's Aphorisms from Osler's bedside teaching (1961), and Anne Wilkinson's Lions in the way: a discursive history of the Oslers (1957) was acquired about the same time for a guinea.

Originally housed in a single case at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Charterhouse Branch, it eventually overflowed into a second when it was housed in the store of the new Charterhouse Library, probably accounted for by the 4000 reprints and pamphlets just referred to. In 1964 the new building of the Royal College of Physicians was opened in Regent's Park; about this time the College received the Thomas Cotton bequest. His admired master, Osler, is remembered in the dining room, named at his request the Osler Room, and in the Osler Oration delivered every two or three years; another room in the College was named the Thomas Cotton Room. Since it did not appear that the whole of the Osler Club Library could be housed in this room, it was eventually decided that it should be used as a museum containing items of furniture and a small bookcase to house special association items. The library proper was found accommodation in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library, not far away in Euston Road in a larger room than could be offered by the College. It was here that Dr. Carlyle Lyon's collection of Osleriana, which must have virtually doubled the number of bound volumes, was housed. It was now that John Thornton felt it was time to resign the post he had held for close on twenty years. Dr. Hughes was appointed librarian in 1968; but neither he nor Eric Gaskell (of the Wellcome), who succeeded him after four years, found it possible to do much with a library which was housed in two different places. Not long after this the room at the Wellcome Institute, as it had now become, was required for other purposes, and the College was asked if accommodation could be found for the whole library there. Thus it came about that the writer, who was then librarian to the College, became Osler Club librarian in 1974. Shelving was ordered for the Thomas Cotton Room, and at the same time the scope and policy of the library were reconsidered. The original intention to provide a medico-historical library for the use of members of the Club had not been fulfilled, at least as far as “use” was concerned. It would seem that the library had been used as a kind of back up to meetings of the Club, especially family evenings at Barts. As has already been seen the 300th meeting of the Club was marked by an exhibition which remained on view at the College for several months. Since the Club does not hold all its meetings at the College, indeed it is somewhat itinerant, there is little to encourage the use of the library. Moreover since the Club's library has been and is now housed in a place where medico-historical facilities are greater than the Club could of its own provide, it was decided that no further additions should be made to the library of books and reprints of medico-historical interest by members of the Club, except where they were papers given to the Club, and that no further material on the history of medicine per se should be acquired; that material of this nature having no bearing on Osler in subject matter or by association should eventually be phased out.

It is time perhaps to give some indication of the extent of the stock in figures. There are some 320 bound volumes, including bound reprints, and an unspecified number of pamphlets, reprints, letters, and photographs, together with the archives of the Club; the last are largely unexplored. It is fairly complete as far as titles published outside journals are concerned, but a long way from completeness in the matter of journal contributions. The second edition of Abbott's bibliography (1939) lists just over 1300 items, a figure which takes no account of reprintings of those papers which have been published in more than one place, but it does include the book reviews and unsigned editorials; these last two groups are hardly represented in the library. Of the 1300 items the Club has about 200. The library is certainly no better off for articles on Osler listed in the recently published Checklist by Nation, Roland and McGovern. This annotated checklist of Osleriana is described as the most extensive of secondary materials on Osler; but does not Osleriana mean more than that? It could surely cover association copies, books belonging to Osler, and even members of the family. Then what about books like Religio medici? There are several editions of this in the
library; there is the edition of Boston, 1862, Osler's favourite. The earliest is that of 1650 (Leyden). It was originally given to the Osler Library by Thomas Cotton, to him by Francis Teale, and to him by the daughter of Charles Williams, office-holder in the Norwich Medico-Chirurgical Society, and bibliographer of Sir Thomas Browne; he had been given it when Osler had acquired a better copy. Finally W.W. Francis wrote: "Now by consent and at my suggestion it crosses the ocean for the fourth time to join the Osler Club, 1958." The inscription in the 1845 edition almost tells its own story, "Lady Osler from A.M. Christmas Day 1927. This was the last book I gave to Lady Osler who died Aug. 31, 1928. It was given back to me the day I took my MA degree at Oxford, Oct. 18, 1928. I had given her this volume as all Sir W.O's Browne collection was of course going to McGill, and she was to be left without a copy of the Religio." A.M. was Arnold Muirhead, John Fulton's room-mate at Oxford, and author of the memoir of Lady Osler. The original manuscript and all the correspondence relating to its writing and publication he had had bound in three volumes which were destined for McGill; but he changed his mind thirty years or more later and gave these volumes to the Club. In an explanatory note at the beginning of one of the volumes Muirhead refers to the loss of the Club's magnificent library — a slender clue as to what the original library was like. A similar volume is the correspondence relating to the Club's first publication, The selected writings of Sir D'Arcy Power 1877-1930 (1931), the first of four Club publications; the second, Selected writings of Sir William Osler (1951) was published to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of his birth and to give medical students "a taste of Osler".

Little survives of the Club's early archives, but a letter written by Warren Dawson in November 1933 to A.W. Franklin concerns Dr. Carlyle Lyon and the possibility of his becoming a member of the Club "as he is a great admirer of Osler". He does not seem to have become a member of the Club, however, until it was refounded after the War, when he soon became its membership secretary. This did not prevent him from making a start on the collection of Osleriana, now the property of the Club. Nearly all his books have his signature, bookplate, and a note about their purchase, and sometimes more. Of the fifteen different editions and impressions of Aequanimitas in the library, eleven are from Carlyle Lyon's collection; one had been lent to T.H. Robinson on 23rd and returned on 26th September 1961. Robinson, a distinguished Baptist divine, had been professor of Hebrew and Semitic languages at Bengal from 1908 to 1915; having been examined by Osler, he was pronounced unfit to return to India; from 1915 to 1944 he was lecturer and then professor at University College, Cardiff. Another copy (2nd ed. 1906) had been lent to a patient who kept it for a year before returning it in October 1963. This had inspired Carlyle Lyon to re-read it in bed with great interest and enjoyment. This edition, it will be recalled, contained three additional essays and L'Envoi — ten items for a bedside library including, besides the Bible and Religio medici, Shakespeare and Meditation of Marcus Aurelius. I had wondered why Carlyle Lyon had included a large folio edition of Shakespeare and these Meditations in his collection. Would that be stretching Osleriana to the limit? If not, then two hymn books, recently donated, embossed on the cover R.S. Osler, might be even though there is in them one hymn by Edward Osler. As a lad Osler cherished an amazing veneration for Uncle Edward; on the shelves of his father's little study there were books by him, and now and then one of his hymns was sung in church. The voyage must have been one of the books Osler referred to, the actual copy, since the copy in the library bears the inscription, Featherstone Osler (Osler's father) from his affectionate brother.

No account of a library of Osler's works would be complete without some reference to R.H. Hill who worked on the Bibliotheca Osleriana and became librarian of the National Central Library, now part of the British Library. He gave the desk in the Thomas Cotton Room which had belonged to Lady Osler. This desk was given to his wife after Lady Osler's death; although the two had met on only a few occasions they had a considerable feeling for each other. When he died not so long ago he left the Club, to which he was a frequent donor, several books, among them the page proof of the Bibliotheca. His gifts included a few letters. Hill was in the Army in 1917, and on one occasion Osler wrote: "Dear Hill, Come and see me when you get back to the Library, I should like to have a talk about my library work in which I hope you may be able to help."

When Dr. Cummings gave the Oslerian Oration (Club, not College) in 1965 he left three Osler letters as a momento of the occasion. One is a reminder of how Osler championed the Index Catalogue wherever he went. This letter is concerned with his visit to Norwich in 1903 and was an appeal to Dr. Fletcher to send a copy of the Index Catalogue to the library of the Medico-Chirurgical Society there — "an excellent collection of about 5000 books and the younger men use it very much."

The library of the Osler Club of London may not have any priceless volumes, but I have tried to show that the notes in many of the books make it a small but fascinating collection. Let this be a final example. One of the copies of Cushing's Life belonged to Laurence Toke Burra and has his bookplate. His name is unfamiliar but at the back on an end-paper is a pencilled note about Osler and the College. Osler and others were rebuked about 1913 for allowing their names to appear in connection with a popular work, the Family Encyclopedia of Medicine, as a result of which Osler was on the point of resigning his Fellowship. The note by L.T.B. refers to this matter and ends by saying "the description of this incident as it was told to me was certainly not to Osler's credit, and my informant was one who would know and who was himself very fond of Osler." But who was it?

Leonard M. Payne


Editorial Committee for the Newsletter: E.H. Bensley, Editor; Philip Teigen, Librarian; Karin Waterhouse, Editorial Assistant.

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OSLER LIBRARY EXHIBIT
OF PHARMACEUTICAL MISCELLANY

The exhibit during the past summer afforded a glimpse of the resources of the Osler Library in pharmaceutical history, particularly rich in herbals, materia medica, and artifacts.

The ancient Egyptians, who attached great importance to the preparation and use of drugs, were represented by some modern reproductions of early texts. A Dioscorides materia medica illustrated the Greco-Roman contribution to pharmacy, its influence extending to modern times. The Ortus Sanitatis (1497), a famous drug book of the Renaissance, and a 13th century Arabic materia medica in manuscript illustrated the contributions of Renaissance Europe and mediaeval Arabic civilization. Culpeper's translation of the London pharmacopoeia — the first in Europe to be imposed on the apothecaries of a whole nation — aroused the wrath of the College of Physicians because in English it could be read by laymen. Along with it, Gerarde's massive Herball, a 17th century English medical recipe manuscript, and some 19th century English cartoons highlighted the history of pharmacy in Britain, while pharmacy in France was represented by Antoine Baume, Pierre Pomet — Chief Druggist of Louis XIV — and an apothecary's bill. A study of William Osler's prescriptions was also featured.

Throughout the exhibit were mortars and pestles, apothecary scales and weights, drug and ointment jars, chiefly 18th and 19th century pieces, and, in one display case, a selection of pharmaceutical items from the Casey A. Wood Historical Collection of Sinhalese Materia Medica.

Marilyn Fransiszyn
Reference and Manuscripts Librarian
Osler Library

NEW APPOINTMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT
OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Dr. George Weisz has been appointed Assistant Professor of the Social History of Medicine in the Department of the History of Medicine at McGill University. Dr. Weisz received his Ph.D. from State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1976, his doctoral dissertation having been on the subject of higher education in France between 1850-1885. During his years of research in France, Dr. Weisz has concentrated increasingly on medical education and the development of the medical profession in France during this same period.

Dr. Weisz will be responsible for teaching the comparative social history of medicine in western European countries in the 19th and 20th centuries and intends to extend his research interests to include the development of the medical profession in Quebec.

FRIENDS OF THE OSMER LIBRARY

At this time each year, the Osler Library appeals for funds from those wishing to support its aims and activities. Friends who wish to contribute are asked to fill in the enclosed blue-coloured form and to return it with their cheques to the designated address.

During the academic year 1972-1973, 123 Friends contributed $1,705 to the Osler Library, while during the just completed year 236 Friends contributed $4,003. While both figures are gratifying, the nearly 100% increase in the number of Friends over the past five years seems particularly significant.

During the past year contributions from the Friends have supported the publishing of the Newsletter and permitted the purchase of two collections of printed material. The first consisted of 20 items relating to public health and sanitary conditions in 19th century England. It included such items as Remarks on the Dictatorial Interference of the General Board of Health, with the Rights and Arrangements of the Local Authorities of Provincial Towns, (1852) and Paddington: Sanitary Report for 1856, prepared by J. Burdon Sanderson. The second collection was of printed ephemeral literature relating to the history of medicine in Canada. Among the thousand or so items were patent medicine almanacs prepared by such firms as T. Milburn, Toronto, J.C. Ayer, Lovell, Massachusetts, and Northrop & Lyman, Toronto.
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