Large gestures in the Gallic manner; even the tentacle seems to be mildly contagious, and a quantum leap from its predecessors. Thirty-five folio volumes – seventeen of text, eleven of plates, followed by a five-volume supplement and two volumes of tables – were printed in Paris, Neuchatel (ostensibly) and Amsterdam between 1751 and 1780. The contents cover every conceivable subject from metaphysics to wig-making, and the illustrations constitute an unparalleled visual archive of the arts, sciences, manufactures and material culture of the eighteenth century. The copy presented to the Osler Library by Dr. H. Rocke Robertson, a former principal of McGill University, a member of the Osler Library’s Board of Curators, and a benefactor of long standing in whose honour our rare books room was named, presented the Library with a complete first edition of the Encyclopédie, or Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, the most famous publishing venture in history, and its reputation is justified on many grounds. In terms of its physical size and the scope of its contents, it represents a quantum leap from its predecessors. Thirty-five folio volumes – seventeen of text, eleven of plates, followed by a five-volume supplement and two volumes of tables – were printed in Paris, Neuchâtel (ostensibly) and Amsterdam between 1751 and 1780. The contents cover every conceivable subject from metaphysics to wig-making, and the illustrations constitute an unparalleled visual archive of the arts, sciences, manufactures and material culture of the eighteenth century. The copy presented to the Osler Library by Dr. H. Rocke Robertson, a former principal of McGill University, a member of the Osler Library’s Board of Curators, and a benefactor of long standing in whose honour our rare books room was named, presented the Library with a complete first edition of the Encyclopédie, or Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers of Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert.

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the helpful accompanying text is Surgery. Behind her is a statue of Aesculapius with his sacrificial animals, the cock and the crow. Two putti gather and crush herbs, while a third draws medicinal gum from a tree. In the background, another putto, symbolizing orthopaedics, props up a tree. In short, the scene is wholly dominated by Lady Surgery; medicine, relegated to an icon, melts into the background, while the lively pharmaceutical and mechanical crafts play explicitly auxiliary roles.

The heart of surgery's prestige, in the view of the Encyclopédie, is its practical effectiveness, and hence its evident capacity for progress. Thus the plates are overwhelmingly devoted to the armamentarium of surgery, and particular stress is laid on technical advances. Our illustration 2 shows elevators designed by Petit, with details of improvements made by Louis himself. The editors' self-conscious mission to sweep away ignorance, fear and mystification is superbly illustrated by a detailed sequence of step-by-step engravings of lithotomy, itself a tour de force of medical illustration. The whole set of plates is illuminated by an explanatory key decked out with cross-references to dozens of articles, enabling the reader to re-construct an entire textbook of surgery from the scattered entries of the Encyclopédie.

Medicine and surgery, however, occupy only a small portion of the contents of the Encyclopédie, and are not the subjects upon which its historic renown is based. Why, then, does the Encyclopédie belong in the Osler Library? The answer is two-fold. First, Sir William Osler's plan for his Library always stressed the scientific context of medicine, and he took pains to acquire many important works in the history of science which have no medical content at all, such as Copernicus' De revolutionibus orbium coelestium (Bibl. Oslo 566) and Newton's Principia mathematica (Bibl. Os1. 1024). Secondly, Osler also selected certain pivotal works in the general realm of philosophy or intellectual history which he felt should be on the shelves of any serious library devoted to recording the development of the human spirit of inquiry. His copies of Plato and Aristotle might be said to fall in this category. Diderot, of course, is not to be compared to Plato and Aristotle might be said to fall in this category. Diderot, of course, is not to be compared to Plato, but the spirit that his Encyclopédie distilled and promoted was one destined to transform medical knowledge and medical practice in the following century. This of itself wins for the Encyclopédie an honourable place amongst the subsidia scientifica of the Osler Library, and for Dr. Robertson, our sincere and profound gratitude.

Faith Wallis
ANOTHER LETTER FROM EDITH WHARTON TO SIR WILLIAM OSLER

In Osler Library Newsletter no. 57 (February 1988), I published, in collaboration with Blake Gopnik, a preliminary report on “Finding Osler’s Letters in the Osler Library”. By way of illustrating the kind of exciting discoveries that our Osler Letters Inventory Project had engendered, I reproduced two hitherto unpublished letters to Osler from the American novelist Edith Wharton which shed precious light on her role in Henry James’ famous illness of 1909-1910.

Osler’s involvement in James’ case is well known from Leon Edel’s biography of James, and has recently been the subject of a fascinating article by Henry D. Janowitz and Adeline R. Tintner entitled “An Anglo-American Consultation: Sir William Osler and Edith Wharton”. The recently discovered letters were printed in the February 1988 Newsletter. While her part in the story does not modify their central argument, it certainly demonstrates how deeply James’ family and circle were disturbed by his condition, and how thoroughly convinced they were of its psychological origin. This is reinforced by another Wharton letter recently discovered in the “Osler Papers” (Osler Library Archives, Accession 326). This letter is in fact a sequel to the two published in my first article. As she promised in her letter of March 11, 1910, Mrs. Wharton did come over from Paris to see Henry James in London. She was on her way back in Paris on March 24, when she wrote the following to Sir William Osler.

_Folkestone, March 24, 19[10]

_Dear Dr. Osler,

_Your note of the 17th was forwarded to me from Paris a few days ago, as I had meanwhile come over to London to see Mr. James, & find out if I could be of any use after Harry James’ [Henry James’ nephew, son of his brother William] departure. Now that a strict rest cure has been decided on, I have become superfluous, & shall merely wait here over Easter, & then go back to Paris.

_I hope “Servetus” is waiting for me there. He had not arrived when I left. If we are in England later I shall venture to remind you of your invitation to Oxford.

_Meanwhile, thank you for writing & please remember that if I can be of use later, I can always dash over for a few days.

_Mr. James is fond of me, & knows that I don’t mind sudden “displacements”, so my coming would not worry him.

_Sincerely yours

Edith Wharton.

Again, Osler’s side of the correspondence is missing, but it is plain that he wrote to reassure Edith Wharton, and to take the edge off her awkwardness at having approached him in this manner by inviting her, in his usual open manner, to drop into 13 Norham Gardens. Evidently as well, Mackenzie and Osler kept the true diagnosis of James’ condition between themselves, for the “rest cure” was a therapy for stress. As Janowitz and Tintner point out, however, such professional reserve was normal, and indeed beneficial, for in the absence of beta-blockers and bypass surgery, the very best that the medical art could do was to try to slow James down and cheer him up.

Faith Wallis

Janowitz and Tintner were not aware of Edith Wharton’s involvement, which indeed was only made manifest when the newly-discovered letters were printed in the February 1988 Newsletter. While her part in the story does not modify their central argument, it certainly demonstrates how deeply James’ family and circle were disturbed by his condition, and how thoroughly convinced they were of its psychological origin.
public programmes and public character by sponsoring the publicity for special events, financing receptions (such as the one held last October to celebrate the arrival of the French theses), and of course, printing the Osler Library Newsletter.

It is plain that the Osler Library has much to thank its Friends for, and this annual autumnal rite is one that we fulfill with particular pleasure this year. Your continued confidence in the Library, its programmes and goals, is deeply appreciated. With this issue of the Newsletter, we formally launch our appeal for donations for the 1989-1990 period. Your renewed support of the Osler Library through its Friends will make possible new seedtimes and harvests in the months to come.

Faith Wallis

N.B. Donations to the Friends of the Osler Library received since June 1989 will be recorded in the February 1990 Newsletter.

A GIFT IDEA FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter, our regular subscribers will find an attractive bookmark advertising Bibliotheca Osleriana, the catalogue of Sir William Osler's Library originally published by Oxford University Press in 1929, re-issued in a second edition in 1969, and recently re-printed (see Osler Library Newsletter no. 57, February 1988). A copy of the Bibliotheca would make a superb Christmas or Hannukah gift for a physician or student of medical history. And when the holidays are over, there are always graduations, birthdays, anniversaries.... Copies of Bibliotheca Osleriana are available for purchase from the Library at a regular price of $140 (Canadian)/$110 (U.S.), or a special Friends price of $125 (Canadian)/$95 U.S. Orders may be sent directly to the Osler Library, 3655 Drummond St., Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3G 1Y6.

FRIDAYS AT FOUR IN THE OSLER LIBRARY

During the 1988-1989 academic year, Dr. Faith Wallis presented for the first time a regular series of informal talks about the history of science and medicine, illustrated with works from the Osler Library's collections. This series, entitled "Fridays at Four in the Osler Library", attracted a faithful and enthusiastic group of participants. Dr. Wallis' "Fridays" will continue this year, and will concentrate on two themes. During the autumn, she will continue last year's presentations on Renaissance encyclopaedic mentalities by looking at Robert Fludd (October 20) and Conrad Gesner (November 17). Robert Fludd is a "re-run" of last February's talk, which had to be cancelled due to illness. In the new year, Fridays at Four will turn to a new theme: the face. From classical Antiquity up the beginning of this century, the visible aspect of the human face has been considered a major indicator of psychological character. Reflections on how the face reveals the soul - and even the maladies of the soul - nourished three branches of early science. The elaborate ancient lore of physiognomy will be presented on January 12. On February 7, Dr. Wallis will explore the obscurities of metoposcopy, the art of divination from lines upon the face. The series will wind up on March 16 with a panoramic view of phrenology, the science of cranial bumps, now thoroughly discredited, but which in its time played a particular role in the emergence of psychiatry. The sessions are on Friday afternoons at 4 p.m., in the historic Osler Room of the Osler Library, and all are invited.

Editorial Committee for the Newsletter:
Edward H. Bensley, Honorary Osler Librarian and Editor; Faith Wallis, History of Medicine Librarian and Associate Editor; Wayne LeBel, Assistant History of Medicine Librarian and Assistant Editor; Lily Szczygiel, Editorial Assistant.

Legal Deposit /1989 ISSN 0085-4557