The Centenary of Osler's
The Principles and Practice of Medicine

This was the first state of the first edition identified by the missigned Georgias (for Gorgias), in the epigraph from Plato on the third leaf. Three thousand copies were issued before the error was corrected in April 1892. It is a strange coincidence that the same error was again found in the first issue of the tenth edition in 1925. In the dedication to be found in each edition of the textbook (excepting the 14th, 15th, and 16th editions), Osler paid tribute to his esteemed teachers, William Arthur Johnson, priest of the parish of Weston and headmaster of Trinity College School; James Bovell of the Toronto School of Medicine; and Robert of pathology and a disease-oriented approach. It was a wonder of precision and clarity, written with great style and replete with literary and classical allusions. Falconer Madan, the Bodleian librarian, paid tribute to these attributes when he said that Osler “succeeded in making a scientific treatise literature.” The many historical and literary references that are found in the textbook bear witness to Osler's classical erudition and his enthusiasm for the history of medicine. A prime example of this is found in the section on obesity: “An extraordinary phenomenon in excessively fat young persons is an uncontrollable desire to sleep — like the fat boy in Pickwick.” His delightful Dickensian embellishment caused this clinical phenomenon to be known as the Pickwickian syndrome.

Osler's book was the subject of much fond puerility amongst his students, who sometimes irreverently referred to it as “the given word”. The Student's Guide to Osler, a poem in Guy's Hospital Gazette (1909) is a prime example of this; a spoof of Osler's use of many recondite names and references, as found in the sixth edition. The poem ends with the following humorous plea:

And now that you are with us at Oxford
You've plenty of leisure, no doubt,
So make, I petition, another edition,
And leave the Pathology out,
Cut symptoms and treatment, and give us
More tales, repartees, epigrams,
In a jocularity amongst his students, who
Would leave the whole book more amusing
to read,
And quite as much use for exams!

The chief criticism of the textbook was its lack of therapeutic direction. Cast as a “therapeutic nihilist” by some critics, and more charitably as a “therapeutic conservative” by others, Osler candidly admitted that medicine had little to offer in the way of curative treatment of most disorders. Osler strongly opposed the systems of homeopathy and polypharmacy that prevailed in his time. Nevertheless, he advocated and used those drugs that he considered rational including nitroglycerine in angina.

Dr. Richard L. Golden is the author of the lead article in this issue of the Newsletter. Dr. Golden practices internal medicine on Long Island, and teaches at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He is a Curator of the Osler Library, and has written numerous articles and books on Osler, including Osler and Oriental Medicine and (with Dr. Charles Roland) Sir William Osler: An Annotated Bibliography with Illustrations. His “most recent accomplishment” (as the Newsletter's Decorative Alphabets and Initials, plate 35, Dover Publications, 1959.)
pectors, iron in anaemia and quinine in malaria, among others. He was also a staunch advocate of “G.O.M.,” “God's own medicine,” as he called morphine.

The establishment of Johns Hopkins of the Principles and Practice of Medicine soon supplanted the entire field of competing medical textbooks. The second edition sold an additional 17,500 copies and by the time of the sixth edition in 1905, 105,000 copies were in print with number 100,000 given to Osler's son, Revere. Osler's royalties amounted to $54,512, equivalent to over $1,000,000 in current terms. Eventually it is estimated that nearly a half million copies were produced.

A truly remarkable event took place in 1905 when Frederick T. Gates, a philanthropic advisor to John T. Rockefeller, read the second edition of the textbook in an effort to acquaint himself with the current state of medicine. Gates wrote of this event: "... I read the whole book without skipping any of it. I speak of this not to commemorate my industry or intelligence, but to testify to Osler's charm, for it is one of the very few scientific books that are possessed of a high literary quality... I saw clearly from the works of this thoroughly enlightened, able and honest man, perhaps the foremost practitioner in the world, that medicine had - with the few exceptions... noted - no cures, and that about all medicine up to 1897 could do was to suggest some measure of relief, how to nurse the sick, and to alleviate in some way the suffering."

Gates communicated these ideas to Rockefeller and initiated a series of events that culminated in the founding of the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research in 1901. This, he wrote, "... had its origin in Dr. Osler's perfectly frank disclosure of the very narrow limitations of ascertained truth in medicine as it existed in 1897." The creation of the Rockefeller Foundation followed in 1913 and its General Education Board gave $1,500,000 to Johns Hopkins to fund the establishment of the full-time system at the medical school. The Harvard Medical School was the recipient of $1,000,000 from the Institute in 1902, a gift that in the teaching and practice of medicine as it existed in 1897." The Rockefeller and initiated a series of events that about all medicine up to 1897 could do was to suggest some measure of relief, how to nurse the sick, and to alleviate in some way the suffering.

Thus a unique situation evolved in 1901 with the Russian edition of 1905-1906. This was followed by an additional 17,500 copies and the entire field of competing English speaking world, and beyond that its ultimate value is to be found. It be-

The seventh edition (1909) of the textbook, the last that Osler did alone, is sometimes considered to be the pinnacle of the series, encompassing the many major advances that had occurred in the seventeen years of publication. Thomas McCormack, Osler's former resident and at that time professor of Medicine at Jefferson Medical College, became co-author in the eighth and the posthumous ninth edition. He carried on as the sole author through the twelfth edition (1935) after which Henry A. Christian of Harvard University assumed the task through the sixteenth and final edition. When The Principles and Practice of Medicine ceased publication in 1947 it had illuminated an extraordinary fifty-five year epoch of medicine. The demise of the textbook no doubt resulted from declining sales, increased popularity of multi-authored textbooks, newer stars such as Cecil, and the imperceptible loss of Osler's input. Osler was not unaware of the possibility of some of these factors when he wrote, "... Naturally I have a strong sentiment about the book, but I know quite well that the life and success of a work depends on the life of a man..." He sought unsuccessfully for many years to transfer editorial control in such a manner as to make the book a Johns Hopkins textbook of medicine.

It remained for Dr. A. McGehee Harvey and his colleagues to bring fulfillment to Osler's vision of a Johns Hopkins textbook of medicine. In 1968, twenty-one years after the cessation of publication, the seventeenth edition of The Principles and Practice of Medicine was published by Appleton-Century-Crofts. This was a new, multi-authored work from the Johns Hopkins faculty, employing a patient-oriented concept and preserving the name and numeration of the original series. Quadrennial revisions have been published, the last of which was the twenty-second edition in 1988. Although not a revision of Osler's book, it came from an institution rich in the tradition of Osler and dedicated to the preservation of his principles and ideals, thus retaining the essence of Osler and his magnam num opus.

At its centennial, Osler's Principles and Practice of Medicine commands not only our profound respect and admiration as a medical book of inestimable value to generations of physicians worldwide and as a work whose influence on research and philanthropy is unprecedented, but gives us a greater insight into Osler, the man, as a means of better understanding his erudition, philosophy, humor and ethics, as well as his truly extraordinary humanism. In his own words, "Books are the witnesses of the spirit - of the thoughts and hopes and deeds of all sorts and conditions of men."

References

5. Osler, op.cit., #5843.
Kircher's Museum Displayed

Historians of art and architecture, of science and medicine, of Jesuit scholarship, and even of Canadian aboriginal peoples will all find something of interest in an important historic volume recently acquired for the Osler Library. The book in question is the illustrated catalogue of the museum of natural history, antiquities, and ethnocraphic artifacts assembled by the Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), and housed in the Society's Roman college. Published in Rome in 1709 by Kircher's successor, Filippo Buonanni, the catalogue's full title is *Museum Kircherianum sive Museuni a P. Athanasio Kirchero in Collegio Romano Societatis Jesu iam pridem descriptione nuper restitutum auctum descriptum et iconibus illustratum.* Its 522 folio pages include 172 engraved plates illustrating the contents of this quintessential Baroque Wunderkammer.

Athanasius Kircher was one of the best-known figures in the scholarly world of his day, with an enormous, if controversial, reputation as a man of learning. He numbered savants like Fabry de Peiresc and Cassendi among his friends, and was read appreciatively by Leibniz. Most of Kircher's life was passed in the Jesuit College in Rome, where he composed a prodigious number of books on a wide variety of subjects; many of his works are represented in the Osler Library.

Kircher's erudition was not ordered by a logical taxonomy of knowledge or a hierarchy of the sciences; rather, it revolved around certain motifs. One of his major obsessions was *origins*: the origin of the human race (discussed in his treatise on the Ark of Noah), the origin of language (the burden of his *Turris Babel*), the origin of knowledge (for which he felt the records of ancient Egypt and China provided the most significant clues), the subterranean sources of fire and water, and even the origin of the dreaded plague (Kircher was the first to suggest that infectious diseases were caused by "germs"). Another central theme was that of *attraction*: the attraction exercised by the magnet became an analogy for the projection of light and sound, for the operation of the laws of gravity, and even for political stability. For Kircher, the universe was knit together by a kind of metaphysical magnetism which expressed itself in *correspondences* between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the visible and invisible worlds. This theme lead logically to an interest in marvels, phenomena whose causes were obscure but ultimately understandable, like the "germs" of the plague. Men, too, could construct their own marvels in the form of *machines*: Kircher was particularly interested in automata, in "computers," and in devices which could project sound and images.

Kircher took over the collection assembled at the College by Alfonso Donnino, and shaped it along the lines suggested by his distinctive brand of intellectual curiosity. He persuaded his fellow Jesuits who were serving as missionaries in Asia or the Americas to send him artifacts, inscriptions, and pictures. He himself collected Egyptian antiquities and hieroglyphic inscriptions, as well as instruments and machines; indeed the only work about the Museum issued in Kircher's lifetime, *Romani Collegii Societatis Jesu Museum Collectarium, ...* published in Amsterdam in 1678 (and also to be found in the Osler Library) concentrates exclusive on Egyptology and mechanical devices. But as Buonanni's catalogue reveals, the range of Kircher's museum was far more extensive. It was organized into 12 classes:

1. Cult statues and sacrificial instruments.
2. Ex-votos and amulets.
3. Funerary art and inscriptions.
4. Funerary lamps.
5. Items of ancient craftsmanship.
6. Fossils and other mineral substances "upon which Nature has impressed a distinctive image".
7. Objects of ethnographic or natural interest brought back by travellers.
8. Marine plants and fruits; marine and land animals (mostly exotic, unusual, deformed or monstrous examples).
9. Machines such as mechanical models for demonstrating principles of physics, hydraulic toys, musical automata, and devices for transmitting sounds and pictures.
10. Paintings, statues and medals.
11. Microscopes and curiosities seen under the microscope.
12. Shells.

Within class 7 are found a number of items sent to Kircher by Jesuit missionaries in New France, including two Huron costumes (one of which is illustrated here), and a beaded belt, for which the following description is provided:

Another belt two inches wide from New France, or the realm of Canada in America. The said Huron people fashioned it with marvellous craftsmanship from minute fragments of the bones of various birds, uniform in size and smaller than the shaft of a goose-feather. First they prepare these fragments by dying them different colours. Then they select the ones they want, and string them together with great skill to depict flowers, letters, birds and plants; the specimen in the Museum is made only from black and white bones. I have seen another, half a palm's breadth wide, in which can be read the words of the angelic salutation: "Ave Maria gratia plena"; it was sent as a gift by the faithful Christians of this region to the church of the Blessed Virgin at Loreto. (p. 225)

It is Kircher's influence on the visual imagination of his age which intrigues Professor Alberto Perez-Gomez, director of McGill's graduate programme in architectural theory and history. Professor Perez-Gomez has been using the Osler Library's Kircher collection for his seminar for a number of years, and was very enthusiastic about the acquisition of the Buonanni catalogue. He also teaches a similar seminar at Harvard, whose resources for Kircher studies, he says, are inferior to those of McGill.

No doubt specialists in various fields are bound to find something of relevance in Kircher's museum, but it is really as a collection that its historical significance must be assessed. The Museum was an obligatory item on the itinerary of every gentleman visiting Rome on the Grand Tour, and it attracted scholars and scientists from across Europe; the inventory of its collections is really a conspectus of material resources for learning in the Baroque age.

The Osler Library and the Director of Libraries, who jointly financed the acquisition of this important volume, are delighted to have been able to seize the opportunity of enhancing a collection of such significant interdisciplinary potential. The Library's portion of the purchase price was covered by a generous donation from Dr. John McGovern, a Curator and long-time friend of the Osler Library. We are grateful for the opportunity to thank Dr. McGovern publicly for helping us to acquire this book.
Adopt An Osler Library Book:
A Progress Report

The response to our appeal, launched in the October 1991 Newsletter, to “adopt an Osler Library book” has been very gratifying. As of January 1992, eight battered books have been adopted by friends of the Library, and are well on their way to recuperation. Our thanks go out to:

- Dr. Richard Creuss, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Chairman of the Board of Curators of the Osler Library, who has adopted two volumes: Daniel Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year* and Andreas Vesalius’ *Epistola, rationem modumque propinandi radicis Chynae decocti...*;
- Dr. William Feindel of the Montreal Neurological Institute, who has funded the restoration of Thomas Willis’ *Cerebri anatome*;
- Mrs Eve Osler Hampson, a Curator of the Library, who adopted Descartes’ *Discours de la methode*;
- Dr. H. Rocke Robertson, a Curator of the Library, for taking on Robert Boyle, *Experiments and Considerations Touching Colours*;
- Dr. Charles Roland, Hannah Professor of the History of Medicine at McMaster University, who has befriended Black’s *Experiments upon Magnesia Alba*; and
- Mr. Eric de Bellaigue of London England, who has adopted Erasmus’ *De recta... pronuntiatione*.

Some readers of the Newsletter have contacted us to express surprise at the high cost of some of the restorations proposed. It seems that many were under the impression that the books require merely routine conservation. This is not the case at all. All fifty books were selected precisely because they need very extensive and costly overhauls, almost always involving washing the book page by page, deacidification etc. The limited space available in the adoption brochure did not permit an extensive description of the condition of each volume, or a breakdown of the costs involved in each procedure. However a detailed look at what is involved in repairing Nathaniel Hodges’ *Loimologia* might clarify the situation:

- **Disbind** $50
- **Wash** $150
- **Deacidify** $210
- **Rezise** $150
- **Repair tears** $50
- **Recover** $120
- **Rebind in calf** $119
- **Leather label** $16
- **TOTAL** $815

As this estimate was prepared almost two years ago, we have added 10% to cover inflation, for a total price of $906.

A word is perhaps in order about the restorer we have engaged for this work. Mrs Terry Remple-Mroz has many years of experience, first as a paper restorer and lately in book restoration. She teaches conservation and restoration in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at McGill University, and has undertaken numerous restoration projects for academic libraries in this region, including the cleaning and repair of a large number of volumes damaged in a flood in the Rare Books Department of McGill’s McLennan Library. Her handiwork is on display in the accompanying illustration, showing Willis’ *Cerebri anatome* before and after surgery.

In some cases, it might appear that the cost of restoring the book equals or even exceeds the cost of purchasing another copy. However, it is doubtful that Osler’s copy of any of our adoptable books could be acquired for much less than the restoration price. The mandate of the Library is to care for Osler’s books and make them accessible: refurbishing these volumes is a homage to the man who collected them as much as to the contents of the books themselves. We are deeply grateful to the friends of the Library who have agreed to adopt our books, and hope that others will find similar “godparents” in the near future. Copies of the adoption prospectus are available from the Library.

Faith Wallis

The Osler Library Fax Number
The Osler Library now has its own fax. The number is (514) 398-5747.