In the Osler Library there are 27 unpublished holograph letters written by William Osler to his wife, during February and March of 1911, from Egypt, Naples, and Rome. These were bound and presented to the Library in 1932 by Lady Osler's sister, Sue Chapin. Later, the Osler Librarian W.W. Francis, added dates, indicated the correct sequence, made all too occasional annotations and inserted a letter that he had received from Osler during that period. Also included is a photograph (Ill. 1) sent in 1946 by "Amo," the daughter of Sir Edmund Boyd Osler. The latter had organised a trip to Egypt with the party consisting of Osler and E.B.O., "Amo," and her husband, Wilmot Matthews, and two friends, Elsie Beathune and Ernest Cattanach. Grace Osler could not join them since their son Edward Revere was at school and the Oslers never left England together without him. Osler must have been very reluctant to go without his wife, but she apparently pleaded her aversion to the heat and insisted that he go (vide infra).

The adventures of this party in Egypt have been detailed elsewhere. After a few days in Cairo, they boarded the S.S. "Seti," one of Thomas Cook's private Nile streamers, on which they spent a month, travelling to Assuan and back, and visiting interesting places on the way, often on donkeys. After a few more days in Cairo, they moved on to Naples, and finally to Rome where Osler left his companions and returned to England. Other people mentioned in Osler's letters, and germane to this article, include Baroudi, the popular Egyptian dragoman on the "Seti," masters from Revere's school, patients, Osler's niece Nona, and Ottille, the daughter of his old friend, William Wright.

Like the selection published by Cushion[1], these letters contain much about the people that Osler met and the places he saw, but in addition, this collection provides an appealing and intimate portrait of Osler, the loving husband and caring father, concerned about finances and practising medicine, shopping for presents, and "dreaming insane dreams."[2] The excerpts given below are as in the original; no attempt has been made to correct spellings, improve punctuation, or expand abbreviations. The meanings are dear.

The letters almost always begin: "Dearest G." and contain regrets that she is not with him sharing his pleasures, and the rationalisation that she would have found the climate unbearable. "I feel so horrid to be off here alone. I fear tho you would have found your old enemy the sun too much—he begins to pipe up!"[3] "Hot as hades again today. Only your day, delicious temperature, nice

Illustration 1. William Osler dressed for the tropics, between Baroudi and Sir Edmund Boyd Osler.

Dr. Anand Date, the author of the lead article in this issue of the Newsletter is Professor and Head of the Department of Pathology at the Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore, India. The Library owes Dr. Date a double debt of gratitude, in that he has also furnished us with a full transcription of Osler's Egyptian letters, supplementing and revising a previous transcription by former Osler Librarian Philip Teigen.
breeze.” (5) “Gee whiz! you would have cried today.” (5) “These donkey trips in the sun will not do. (6) “How glad I am you made me go.” (6) “Most of the days you would have enjoyed, but it was no day to stay.” (6)

Gentle endearments are expressed. “Perfectly fascinating eve – only one regret!” (14) “Our parents are delightfully. Adam, Enoch, Moses, Aaron, Mahomet & c. will come out all right – good health, sweet disposition – hang the brains – they might have been introduced into Ch Ch!” (6) After a visit to “Edfu one of the best antic.” (12) “Edfu still lingers in one’s memory a dream (By the way I am still dreaming insane dreams)” (6) And added to the top of one of the last letters from the 5th: “Heavens! I dreamt last night I found you with a baby – 6w old – such a darling but he was all over the place like just a monkey, & had sat for an hour at the window n. chas & d. had drawn an immense crowd by his antics” (12)

Most of the letters end “Yours W. or W.O.” or “Your loving W.” Among less frequent endings are “Yours Orton” (28) and once “Your loving Egerton” (12)

---

“Gee whiz! you would have died several deaths. It was hot in the sunshine & red hot in the sun with sand & dust galore.” (11) “How glad I am you made me go.” (11) “Most of the days you would have enjoyed, but it was no day to stay.” (11)

Gentle endearments are expressed. “Perfectly fascinating eve – only one regret!” (14) “Our parents are delightfully. Adam, Enoch, Moses, Aaron, Mahomet & c. will come out all right – good health, sweet disposition – hang the brains – they might have been introduced into Ch Ch!” (6) After a visit to “Edfu one of the best antic.” (12) “Edfu still lingers in one’s memory a dream (By the way I am still dreaming insane dreams)” (6) And added to the top of one of the last letters from the 5th: “Heavens! I dreamt last night I found you with a baby – 6w old – such a darling but he was all over the place like just a monkey, & had sat for an hour at the window n. chas & d. had drawn an immense crowd by his antics” (12)

Most of the letters end “Yours W. or W.O.” or “Your loving W.” Among less frequent endings are “Yours Orton” (28) and once “Your loving Egerton” (12)

---

“Gee whiz! you would have cried today.” (5) “These donkey trips in the sun will not do. (6) “How glad I am you made me go.” (6) “Most of the days you would have enjoyed, but it was no day to stay.” (6)

Gentle endearments are expressed. “Perfectly fascinating eve – only one regret!” (14) “Our parents are delightfully. Adam, Enoch, Moses, Aaron, Mahomet & c. will come out all right – good health, sweet disposition – hang the brains – they might have been introduced into Ch Ch!” (6) After a visit to “Edfu one of the best antic.” (12) “Edfu still lingers in one’s memory a dream (By the way I am still dreaming insane dreams)” (6) And added to the top of one of the last letters from the 5th: “Heavens! I dreamt last night I found you with a baby – 6w old – such a darling but he was all over the place like just a monkey, & had sat for an hour at the window n. chas & d. had drawn an immense crowd by his antics” (12)

Most of the letters end “Yours W. or W.O.” or “Your loving W.” Among less frequent endings are “Yours Orton” (28) and once “Your loving Egerton” (12)
REFERENCES

[Unless otherwise stated, all letters are from W.O. to Mrs. Osler]
2. Ibid. W.O. to W.W. Francis, February 10, 1911.
5. Osler’s letters from Egypt. op. cit., Acc. 8282.
8. Ibid. Acc. 8282/7.
10. Ibid. Acc. 8282/11.
11. Ibid. Acc. 8282/15.
12. Ibid. Acc. 8282/17.
15. Ibid. Acc. 8282/2.
17. Ibid. Acc. 8282/24.
19. Osler’s letters from Egypt. op. cit., Acc. 8282/16.
22. Ibid. Acc. 8282/9.
23. Ibid. Acc. 8282/12.
24. Ibid. Acc. 8282/23.
25. Ibid. Acc. 8282/5.
27. Ibid. Acc. 8282/13.
28. Ibid. Acc. 8282/18.
29. Ibid. Acc. 8282/19.
30. Ibid. Acc. 8282/22.

Illustration 1. William Osler dressed for the tropics, between Baroudi and Sir Edmund Boyd Osler.

FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY
A Report and an Appeal

The year which has passed since the last Report to the Friends of the Osler Library was filed has been one which, on the surface, might seem to have been an uneventful one, a mere interim between the end of my tenure as active head of the Library, the arrival of the new History of Medicine Librarian, June Schachter. Beneath this apparent calm of anticipation, however, much has been going on — much indeed which the Friends of the Osler Library have materially assisted to go on. To begin with, the Library’s program of acquisition of new and historic works in the history of medicine never faltered. Normally, these reports concentrate on the rare books purchased through the Friends’ funds; this year, by way of a change, I would like to highlight a few outstanding new works. The range of subjects covered by these acquisitions is very striking; from Giorgio Legg’s biography of Marie Jean Pierre Flourens (1794-1867): physiologist et historien des sciences, through A. Saba’s new edition of the optics of the medieval Islamic scientist Ibn Al- Haytham, to a splendid 2-volume album of Tibetan Medical Paintings. In the revised collections policy discussed and approved at the meeting of the Library’s Board of Cura tors two years ago, the Library undertook to create a truly comprehensive collection in the history of medicine, throughout the ages and world-wide. It is evident that the support of the Friends of the Osler Library is absolutely essential to the fulfillment of this mandate, as the sample titles listed above indicate, it is already helping towards its accomplishment.

Collections development is a major priority for the Friends, but it is far from the only way in which they help the Library. Last year, for example, Friends’ gifts helped to purchase customized bookcases for the mezzanine of the Library, designed to fit against the inner rail of the mezzanine and to make the existing bookcases more efficient. These new bookcases have done much to ease what was rapidly becoming a shelving crisis. Here again, the Friends’ generosity was crucial, for the normal capital alterations grants of the University would never have covered such a project, especially in these times of fiscal restraint. The continued publication and distribution of the Osler Library Newsletter is also made possible by the Friends, as are countless small, but essential purchases which enhance our services and help to preserve and publicize our collections. With this issue of the Newsletter, we are launching our 1993-1994 appeal for donations from our Friends. A recent study of the income of the Osler Library over the past decade has shown that the percentage of our total available funding derived from the annual donations of the Friends has grown from 5% to well over 15% since 1982. To put it another way, we are three times as dependent on your support as we were ten years ago. The Librarian, staff and Curators of the Osler Library have never been more aware of the multitude of ways in which the Friends sustain our daily life; we thank you for your confidence in our work, and appeal to you to renew your support for 1993-1994.

Faith Wallis


Dr Roger Glysh of Montreal has become the latest friend of the Library to “adopt” a battered book for restoration. The volume he has chosen is by Rembertus Dodoens, and is entitled Strirpium historiæe pampctes sex. Sive libri XXX. This is the first edition of this famous herbal, printed by Christopher Plantin in Antwerp in 1583, it is numbered 2475 in the Bibliotheca Plantiniana. Dodoens (1517-1588) was the first great modern botanist. A native of Malines and graduate of Louvain, he was court physician to several Habsburg rulers, and later professor of medicine at Leiden. This is his magnum opus, and the patriarch of a long line of translations and adaptations, including Gerarde’s Herbal.

Illustrated with hundreds of delicate and naturalistic woodcuts, it exercised a great influence on botanical iconography as well as the organization of botanical information. The Library’s copy is remarkable for its associations with Robert Burton, author of The Anatomy of Melancholy, one of Osler’s favourite books. It belonged to his brother, William Burton the antiquary and author of Description of Leicestershire (B.O. 4638), and later to William’s son Cassibelton Burton, both of whom left manuscript notes in the volume.

3
Osler Day this year is scheduled for Wednesday, November 10, 1993, and as usual, the day promises to be packed with interesting events. In the morning, the Board of Curators of the Osler Library will hold its annual meeting in the Library itself. That afternoon, at 5 p.m., the Osler Lecture will be delivered by Dr. Donald C. Johanson, probably the best known American paleoanthropologist of our day. In 1974, Dr. Johanson discovered a three million year old hominid skeleton, now known as "Lucy", in the Hadar Valley of Ethiopia; this discovery not only propelled Dr. Johanson to fame, but has exercised an extraordinary influence on our understanding of early hominid evolution. The unearthing of "Lucy" was followed a year later by his finding of the "first family", a unique collection of the remains of thirteen individuals who died in a single geological moment.

Dr. Johanson received his graduate training in human paleontology at the University of Chicago under Dr. F. Clark Howell. In 1975, he was appointed curator of physical anthropology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and in 1976 developed a world-renowned laboratory of physical anthropology. In 1981, he founded the Institute of Human Origins, in Berkeley, California. Field research has taken him to Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, where in 1986 he discovered the 1.8 million year old partial skeleton of Homo habilis.

Readers of the Newsletter will probably have encountered Dr. Johanson through his popular books Lucy, Lucy's Child, and Journey from the Dawn, or they may have seen one of his numerous television appearances on PBS, or in the National Geographic Society documentaries. On Osler Day, you will have the opportunity to hear him speak in person on the search for our human ancestors. Afterwards, you may wish to attend the annual Osler Banquet, organized by the Medical Students Society, and resplendent with such time-honoured rituals as the passing of the silver Loving Cup and the ceremonial "stoning" of the dining room ceiling with bread-rolls. In the midst of this medical carnival, Dr. Johanson will also respond to questions from the floor about his Osler Lecture. Tickets for the banquet are available through Stella Zoccali at the Department of Social Studies of Medicine, telephone (514) 398-6033.

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

Legal Deposit 3/1993 ISSN 0085-4557