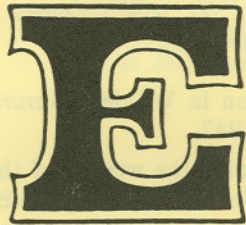


OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

NO. 38 – OCTOBER 1981

AN EGERTON Y. DAVIS CHECKLIST



GERTON Y. DAVIS (EYD) is a pen-name, invented by William Osler during the 1880s and used by him for many years, that has been adopted by others also and used chiefly when submitting letters to editors of journals. Having invented the name to play a crude practical joke

(Cushing, *Life of Sir William Osler*, I:239-41), Osler came to use it in a variety of ways. He once hid behind the name when reviewing a book to which he had contributed two essays (A2 in the checklist below). On several occasions he used the pen-name to escape public notice and reportorial scrutiny while travelling. Cushing relates this anecdote of Osler being accosted in a hotel lobby: " 'This is Dr. Osler, I believe?' To which he [Osler] would be likely to reply: 'No – sorry – often mistaken for him. My name is Davis – E.Y. Davis of Caughnawauga' " (I:470). There are many other instances as well when EYD served Osler and his friends by lightening the days when the pressures of medical practice, research, and statesmanship were heavy.

While Osler was still actively using this pen-name, others began to adopt it, a practice that pleased and amused him. In 1895, he wrote a letter in mock anger to Daniel Gilman, President of The Johns Hopkins University, complaining that although the EYD *nom-de-plume* was copyrighted, the Dean of The Johns Hopkins University Medical School had the audacity to use it (Cushing, I:424).

Even until last year, writers have continued to use the EYD pseudonym, chiefly for letters to editors, but once for a review of Cushing's *Life*. Of the ten letters to the editor recorded below, two were written by Osler (A1 and A3); one by J. William White (A4), a friend and colleague of Osler's; one by Willard Goodwin (A7); two by Charles G. Roland (A10 and A11); and four by still anonymous persons (A8, A9, A12, and A13). Of the three book reviews ascribed to EYD, two were written by Osler (A2 and A5) and one by an unknown writer (A6).

EYD's literary activity is analyzed in the surprisingly large literature written about him, beginning in 1886. While not wishing to summarize all the fifty-five items in Section B of the checklist, we can suggest that interested readers begin by turning to Cushing's biography (B7) and the articles by Earl F. Nation (B38 and B43), Willard E. Goodwin (B40), William B. Bean (B42), and A.H.T. Robb-Smith (B46). To our mind the cleverest and most amusing of the hoaxes perpetrated by EYD is his story of the Newfoundland seal hunter swallowed by a sperm whale. This is recorded in A7, with further comments and developments in B19, B23, and B40.

This checklist is divided into two parts. Part A lists in chronological order letters submitted to editors of periodicals and subsequently published under the pseudonym of EYD, or some variant thereof, and book reviews signed EYD, or in one case submitted by him but published anonymously (A2). Part A has been narrowly defined and excludes numerous letters and notes of EYD in manuscript, as well as printed items that are neither book reviews nor letters to an editor. In defining Part A so narrowly, we have gone against the advice of at least one Oslerian who suggested a broader scope to our effort. But letters to editors and reviews are well defined genres of medical literature and quite distinct from the other appearances of the EYD *nom-de-plume*. These unlisted remains of EYD, of course, deserve recording somewhere.

Part B lists in chronological order printed articles or parts of books *about* EYD. These provide not only an introduction to his life and works but also a sense of the ebb and flow of his popularity.

Each work listed has a two (e.g. B1) or three element (e.g. A1a) serial number. An A indicates the work is ascribed to the pen-name, and a B is used for works about EYD. The second element is an ordinal number to indicate when that work was written in relation to other works of Part A or Part B. Lastly, and for some works only, a lower case letter distinguishes different editions and in one case a translation.

It is customary for compilers of checklists to conclude their prefatory remarks with disclaimers of completeness and total accuracy; when the subject of a checklist is a pseudonym that appears in book review sections and letters to editors columns, such qualification is mandatory. Indeed, one chief purpose of this checklist is to focus attention on EYD in the hopes that others will ferret out additional details of his life and further accounts of his work.

A. Letters and Reviews by Egerton Y. Davis

A1a. Egerton Y. Davis, "Vaginismus," *Medical News* (Philadelphia), 45:673, December 13, 1884.

"Inspired by an editorial, *ibid.*, pp. 602-3, this is still seriously quoted as the Davis case! Though Osler wrote it, he was not responsible for its publication. It was vouched for by the editor of the *Canada M[edical] and S[urgical] J[ournal]*, who sent it to the *Med[ical] News* in revenge for the trick Osler had played on him the previous year..." (Abbott B16, p. 137).

A1b. -----, *Medical Times* (New York), 73:52, February 1945.

Published as part of B18.

A1c. -----, *New Physician*, 16:301, November 1967.
Published as part of B35.

A1d. -----, *Urology*, 2:468-470, October 1973.
Published as part of B43.

A2 Unsigned review of volumes II and III of William Pepper's *A System of Practical Medicine by American Authors* (Philadelphia: Lea Brothers, 1885) in *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, 91:226-239, January, 1886.

This is added to the Davis canon on the strength of Cushing's testimony that "the review when submitted was signed 'E.Y.D.' but the editors saw fit to omit these initials" (I:276). Although Maude Abbott does not list this as the work of either Osler or Davis, she reports (B16, p. 65) in a note to the entry for Osler's contribution on diseases of the blood to Pepper's later *Text-Book of the Theory and Practice of Medicine by American Teachers* that "there is a story that he anonymously reviewed one of his articles on the blood – probably this one – severely criticizing himself. His friends were indignant, and endeavoured to discover who the reviewer was." If this review of *Pepper's System* was, indeed, written by EYD, he pays a deft compliment in it to E. Leyden, Hippolyte Martin, and William Henry Welch by saying that from them Osler "seems to have obtained much valuable information" (p. 238). He also criticizes Osler's section on "Diseases of the Substance of the Heart," by saying, "We scarcely see why, except to follow customary usage, fibroid heart should be considered as a myocarditis" (p. 237). Finally, EYD points to an error in Osler's section entitled "Diseases of the Blood and Blood Glandular System" by saying "There is an extraordinary mistake in the number of white corpuscles per cubic millimetre, which is stated to be from 'eight to fifteen millions!' "(p.239).

A3. E.Y.D., "Extrauterine Changed to Intrauterine Pregnancy by Electricity," *Medical News* (Philadelphia), 48:279, March 6, 1886.

Evoked by serious but unlikely claims by Henry J. Garrigues (*Medical News*, 1885, 47:649-652), Paul F. Mundé (*Medical News*, 1885, 47:717), and Augustus Stabler (*Medical News*, 1886, 48:234-235), this letter uses a clever, if wholly false, analogy to introduce a serious discussion of their assertions.

A4. E.T.D., Jr., "Peyronie's Disease – Strabisme du Pénis," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, 148:485, April 30, 1903.

This jovial letter was actually written by J. William White, and submitted after Osler had published a communication in the same journal a month earlier, signing it J.W.W., Jr. The T is a typographical error for Y. (Abbott B16, p. 137).

A5. E.Y.D., Review of H.D. Rolleston, *Diseases of the Liver, Gall-Bladder, and Bile Ducts* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1905), in *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, 129:896-897, May 1905.

So far as we can tell, this is a serious and straightforward review.

A6. Edgerton Y. Davis, "The Ship of Aesculapius," *Phi Beta Pi Quarterly*, 24:142, 1927.

We have not seen this, but according to Nation-Roland-McGovern (B45, p. 51), it is a review of Cushing's *Life of Sir William Osler*.

A7a. Edgerton Y. Davis, Jr., "Man in Whale," *Natural History*, 56:241, May 1947.

The circumstances surrounding the writing of this letter are described by Goodwin (B40). In his letter, EYD describes an unfortunate Newfoundland seal-hunter, who had been swallowed by an errant sperm whale.

A7b. -----, *Urology Digest*, 9:17-18, August 1970.

This forms part of B40.

A8. Edgerton Y. Davis, "Regarding Aortic Aneurysms," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 260:943, April 30, 1959.

In this brief letter, the sharp-eyed Davis noted a careless statistical inference in an article about heart disease.

A9. Edgerton Y. Davis, "Blithe Spirit," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 274:166, January 20, 1966.

A10. E.Y.D. Avis, "Lunette Antialcoolisme," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 197:161, September 26, 1966.

A11. E.Y.D. Avis, "Let the Patients Prescribe," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 200:84, April 3, 1967.

The occasion for this letter was a Gallup poll of laymen that declared a drug to be both safe and effective.

A12. E.Y. Davis, "Posterior Thump-version," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 284:919, April 22, 1971.

To this letter, an editor has appended a note: "We can all rejoice that E.Y. Davis, in spite of his hoary age, still displays the innovative spirit."

A13. Edgerton Yorrick Davis III, [Letter to the Editor], *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 54:581, Winter 1980.

1940-1949

- B17. James V. Ricci, *One Hundred Years of Gynaecology, 1800-1900* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1945), pp. 552 and 553.
- B18. A.C. J[acobson], "Penis Captivus: Myth or Actual-ity? With Some Notes on Sir William Osler's *Alter Ego*," *Medical Times* (New York), 73:52-54, February 1945.
- B19. ["Man in whale"] *Natural History*, 56:289, June 1947.
Two letters and comment concerning EYD's "Man in Whale" letter (A7).
- B20. George Blumer, "The Jocular Side of Osler," *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 84:34-39, July 1949.
- B21. H.P. Wright, "Osler - a Personal Tribute," *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 61:73-75, July 1949.
- B22. Chauncey D. Leake, "Osler's Ethical Standards," *North Carolina Medical Journal*, 10:398-400, August 1949.
"Psychologically Osler's alter ego must have been a great relief for him. Nevertheless, it raises rather delicate problems of an ethical nature" (p. 400).

1950-1959

- B23. "Daffodils and dinosaurs," *Time*, 55(14):65-66, April 3, 1950.
A brief recounting of the "Man in Whale" hoax.
- B24. Ian MacNeill, "The Scamp Who Became the Great Physician," *Maclean's Magazine*, 64(11):14-15 and 36-37, June 1, 1951.
There is a brief (and incorrect) reference to EYD on p. 37.
- B25. M. Pierce Rucker, "Sir William Osler's Obstetrical Interests," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 26:153-160, March-April 1952.
- B26. Saul Jarcho, "Some Hoaxes in the Medical Literature," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 33:342-347, July-August 1959.

1960-1969

- B27. John H. Black, "Humour and Humanity," *Centaur of Alpha Kappa Kappa*, 65:117-120, January 1960.
- B28. William B. Bean, review of Anne Wilkinson, *Lions in the Way: A Discursive History of the Oslers* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1956), in *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 107:630-631, April 1961.

- B29. A [lan]H[euser], *Centenary Book of the Parish of St. John the Evangelist, Montreal 1861-1961* (Montreal: [n.p.], 1961), pp. 33-34.
- B30. "William Osler and the Incredible Tale," *Medical Record and Annals*, 55:61, April 1962.
- B31. Earle P. Scarlett, "William Osler: Obstetrician," *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 109:625-629, May 1962.
- B32. Clarence B. Farrar, "Osler's Story of 'The Baby on the Track,'" *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 90:781-784, March 28, 1964.
- B33. William B. Bean, "Osler, the Legend, the Man and the Influence," *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 95:1031-1037, November 12, 1966.
- B34. William B. Bean, "Osler, Trollope and the Fixed Period," *Transactions of the American Clinical and Climatological Association*, 78:242-248, 1967.
- B35. Ernest Lachman, "Anatomy as Applied to Clinical Medicine," *New Physician*, 16:301-303, November 1967.
- B36. Victor B. Scheffer, *The Year of the Whale* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), pp. 84-86.

"Well and good, Dr. Davis, [referring to item A7] though it is strange that you waited more than half a century to tell your tale. Perhaps it will be confirmed some day through the discovery of the log-book of the schooner *Toulinguet*, or through the revival of some grisly sea chanty sung in the taverns of St. Johns. Meanwhile, may I venture to doubt it?"

- B37. William Osler, "The Inner History of The Johns Hopkins Hospital," edited, annotated and introduced by Donald G. Bates and Edward H. Bensley, *The Johns Hopkins Medical Journal*, 125:184-194, October 1969.
EYD is briefly mentioned in the introduction by the editors.
- B38. Earl F. Nation, "Osler's Alter Ego," *Diseases of the Chest*, 56:531-537, December 1969.
- B39. Charles G. Roland, "Osler and His Friend Davis," *Diseases of the Chest*, 56:468-469, December 1969.

1970-1979

- B40. Willard E. Goodwin, "Sir William Osler, the Jester," *Urology Digest*, 9:15-23, August 1970.
- B41. Morris Fishbein, "Medical Hoaxes," *Medical World News* (New York?), 13:52, March 31, 1972.

B. Publications about Egerton Y. Davis 1886-1889

- B1. Paul F. Mundé, "Extrauterine Pregnancy Changed to Intrauterine by the Galvanic Current," *Medical News* (Philadelphia), 48:363-364, March 27, 1886.

This letter is a response to A3.

- B2. ["E.Y. Davis,"] *Montreal Medical Journal*, 17:152, August 1888.

The monthly "Personal" column records a visit by Davis to Montreal.

1900-1909

- B3a. Enoch Heinrich Kisch, *Das Geschlechtsleben des Weibes in physiologischer, pathologischer und hygienischer Beziehung* (Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1904), pp. 345-346.

- B3b. -----, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1907), p. 365.

- B3c. Enoch Heinrich Kisch, *The Sexual Life of Woman in Its Physiological, Pathological and Hygienic Aspects* (London: Rebman, 1910), pp. 340-341.

1910-1919

- B4. B[ayard] H[olmes] "The Relation of Medical Literature to Professional Esteem," *Lancet-Clinic*, 114:113-115, August 7, 1915.

Notes how Osler used EYD to satirize a "tendency...to outdo any thesis with exaggerated personal experiences".

- B5. "Seventy Years Young," *Lancet*, 197:23, July 5, 1919.

Praises Osler for rescuing the Davis family from oblivion.

1920-1929

- B6. Max Hühner, *A Practical Treatise on Disorders of the Sexual Function in the Male and Female* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1921; reprinted 1927), p. 184.

Cites the Davis case (A1) without realizing its spuriousness.

- B7. Harvey Cushing, *The Life of Sir William Osler* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925), I:181, 239-41, 276, 358, 393-4, 424, 437-8, 470, 499, 525, 532, 578-9, 608, 674-5, 684; II:85, 380, 635, 658, 680.

This list probably does not exhaust all references to EYD.

- B8. Maude E. Abbott, et al., "Classified and Annotated Bibliography of the Publications of Sir William Osler, Bart., F. R. S., etc.," *Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums and Journal of Technical Methods*, 1926, 9:521 and 551.

See also the augmented reissue (B16).

- B9a. W. W. Francis, "The Osler Library," *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 21:137-139, August 1929.

Concludes with a quotation from EYD's "Burrowings of a Bookworm".

- B9b. -----, *McGill News Supplement*, 10:10-12, September 1929.

1930-1939

- B10. W. W. Francis, "The Osler Library," *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital*, 46:74-82, [January] 1930.

A longer version of B9, it also concludes with an allusion to EYD.

- B11. Archibald Malloch, "William Osler," *Bulletin of the Academy of Medicine, Toronto*, 5(5):48, May 1932.

- B12. James A. Miller, "Some Vignettes from Tuberculosis History," *Hygeia*, 14:983-985, November 1936.

"When I last saw Sir William, on the occasion of a week-end visit with him at Oxford during the war, I attempted to rally him on the identity of Dr. E.Y. Davis, suggesting that perhaps he himself was he. His eyes danced with merriment as he exclaimed: 'You don't say. That is a great joke! As a matter of fact I saw the man once, and I suspect that he was a great scalawag!' Then he quickly brought down from his library shelves a number of publications concerning Dr. E.Y. Davis, ran through them with great zest but never once admitted any personal connection with them."

- B13. Thomas McCrae, "Sir William Osler," pp. 247-250 in *History of the Interurban Clinical Club 1905-1937*, ed. David Riesman (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, [1937]).

- B14. W.W. Francis, "At Osler's Shrine," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 26:1-8, October 1937.

- B15. Donald W. Atcheson, "Willie Osler, William Osler, E.Y. Davis, Doctor Osler and Their Libraries," *McGill Medical Undergraduate Journal*, 7(3):36-43, February 1938.

- B16. Maude E. Abbott (ed.), *Classified and Annotated Bibliography of Sir William Osler's Publications* (Montreal: Medical Museum, McGill University, 1939), pp. 49, 79, and 137.

B42. William B. Bean, "William Osler: The Egerton Yorrick Davis Alias," pp. 49-59 in *Humanism in Medicine*, ed. John P. McGovern and Charles R. Burns (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1973).

B43. Earl F. Nation, "William Osler on Penis Captivus and Other Urologic Topics," *Urology*, 2:468-470, October 1973.

B44. Fred C. Rehfeldt, "Tribute to Egerton Y. Davis, or: Long Live the Baby on the Track," *Texas Medicine*, 70(3):83-87, March 1974.

B45. Earl F. Nation; Charles G. Roland, and John P. McGovern, *An Annotated Checklist of Osleriana* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1976).

EYD can be found through the detailed index.

B46. A.H.T. Robb-Smith, "Osler's Sense of Humour," pp. 48-67 in *Oslerian Anniversary Incorporating the Fitzpatrick Lecture for 1975: The Record of the 300th Meeting of The Osler Club of London Held Jointly with the Royal College of Physicians of London* (London: The Osler Club of London, 1976).

B47. Charles L. Stackhouse, "Is Breast Best?" *New England Journal of Medicine*, 298:345, February 9, 1978.

B48. Richard L. Golden, "Dr. E.Y. Davis Exposed," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 298:1037-1038, May 4, 1978.

B49. F. Kräupl Taylor, "Penis Captivus - Did It Occur?" *British Medical Journal*, 2:977-978, October 20, 1979.

B50. Richard Roberts, "Penis Captivus," *British Medical Journal*, 2:1591, December 15, 1979.

1980-

B51. "E.Y. Davis - Again," *Osler Library Newsletter*, 33:7, February 1980.

B52. A.H.T. Robb-Smith, "Egerton Y. Davis, M.D., and Placentophagy," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 56:258-259, March 1980.

B53. A.G. Richards, "Casting Light on Darwin's Ape," *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 123:476 and 482, September 20, 1980.

To Richards' confession of having been taken in by a sculpture claimed to be by EYD, an editor of the *CMAJ* says: "We rather think Dr. Richards is trying to make a monkey of us" (p. 482).

B54. Charles G. Roland (ed.), "Sir William Osler's Dreams and Nightmares," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 54:418-446, Fall 1980.

EYD briefly appears on p. 431, n. 56.

B55. Richard M. Caplan, "More About Young Stamford: A Further Contribution to the Holmesian Corpus," *Pharos*, 44(2):16-20, Spring 1981.

In a fictional letter, EYD meets Alexis St. Martin.

P.M. Teigen
E.H. Bensley

"BROWNE 300"

The tercentenary of the death of Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), William Osler's lifelong mentor, is to be commemorated in Norwich, England on June 25 and 26, 1982. Those interested in receiving detailed information about the programme should communicate with Dr. A. Batty Shaw, Secretary, Browne 300, Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 3SR, England. This "Browne 300" recalls the memory of what might be called an earlier "Browne 300", the commemoration in Norwich on October 19, 1905, of the tercentenary of Browne's birth, an event in which Osler took an active part. A full account of this earlier "Browne 300" was presented in *The British Medical Journal* of October 28, 1905.

A BIOGRAPHY OF WILDER PENFIELD (1891-1976)

As was expressed in an appreciation published in the June 1976 issue of the *Osler Library Newsletter*, Dr. Wilder Penfield was a loyal friend and enthusiastic supporter of the Osler Library. It is therefore entirely appropriate that, although the *Newsletter* does not present book reviews, note should be taken here of the appearance this year of a biography of Dr. Penfield. Entitled *Something Hidden: A Biography of Wilder Penfield* and published by Doubleday Canada, Limited, Toronto, ON and Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, NY, it was written by Jefferson Lewis, one of Dr. Penfield's grandsons. It is especially significant that Mr. Lewis had free access to his grandfather's personal papers, including his voluminous diaries, and he has made extensive use of these sources, as well as many others.

BIBLIOTHECA OSLERIANA

Some readers of the *Newsletter* may not be aware that the 1969 reprint of the *Bibliotheca Osleriana* is still in print. This re-issue with a Prologue by Lloyd G. Stevenson and corrections made by W.W. Francis and others, is available for \$65.00 (Canadian funds) from McGill-Queen's University Press, Purvis Hall, 1020 Pine Avenue West, Montreal, Quebec, H3A 1A2.

FRANCISCAN REMINISCENCES

Dr. Edmund E. Simpson, a McGill medical graduate of 1939, has produced, as both author and printer, an elegant brochure entitled "William Willoughby Francis." It contains many personal reminiscences of our first Osler Librarian. Those who wish to obtain a copy should communicate with Dr. Simpson at 6206 Homestead Drive, Placerville, California 95667.

Editorial Committee for the *Newsletter*: E.H. Bensley, Editor; Philip Teigen, Osler Librarian; Lorraine Hicks, Editorial Assistant.

FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

During the past fiscal year, the Osler Library was gratified to receive nearly \$5,300 in contributions from two hundred and sixty-six Friends. Both figures indicate the continuing, strong support of the Library by Friends from many different parts of the world.

Last year's fund went for a variety of special projects. The first was the printing and mailing of this *Newsletter*; the second was the underwriting, in part, of the cost of repairing Vesalius's *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) and some manuscripts of Sir Thomas Browne; and the third was the purchase of several books and a quantity of printed ephemera dealing with the history of Canadian medicine.

As in the past, with the fall issue of the *Newsletter*, we launch our appeal to the Friends of the Osler Library for funds for the 1981-82 academic year. Friends who wish to contribute to this appeal are asked to fill in the enclosed golden-rod coloured form and return it with their cheques to one of the two designated addresses.