
OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

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THE BOOK THAT DR. OSLER LOST



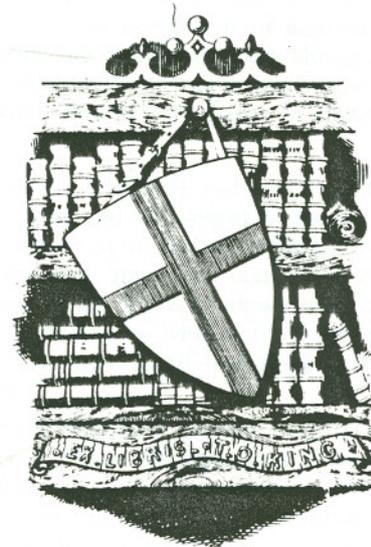
The title of this article is taken from a story published in a Montreal newspaper, *The Gazette*, July 12th, 1975. The author was Edgar Andrew Collard, Editor Emeritus of *The Gazette* and well-known Montreal historian. In his story Mr. Collard told how William Osler acquired a copy of the first

edition of Alexander Schmidt's *Shakespeare – Lexicon* and then promptly lost it.

The story, as related by Osler himself, may be found in his introduction to the *Bibliotheca Osleriana* and is as follows. "Before leaving Berlin in December 1873, while ordering Virchow's Archiv at Reimer's, I saw on the desk the prospectus of Schmidt's 'Shakespeare – Lexicon,' which I asked to have sent to me as soon as published. In October 1875 I moved from Victoria Square up Beaver Hall Hill to rooms with Mr. King, an Englishman employed in the Custom House, who had but one thought in life – Shakespeare. He had an excellent library in which I often spent a pleasant hour. He was a dear old man, much esteemed, and always ready to spend more than he could afford on his hobby. One afternoon at the College, just before my lecture, the postman left on the table a parcel from Reimer's, and to my delight it was Schmidt's concordance, which had really been forgotten. My first thought was, how happy Mr. King will be to see it. I looked at it hurriedly but with much anticipatory pleasure. On my return to the house Mr. King, who had just come in, was sitting by the fire and greeted me in his cheery way with, 'What's that you've got?' 'Something that will rejoice your heart,' I said, and deposited the work in his lap. The shock of the realization of a life-long dream, a complete concordance of Shakespeare, seemed to daze the old man. He had no further interest in me and not a word did he say. I never got it back! ..."

The Mr. King of Osler's story was Thomas Davies King (1819-1884). Born in Bristol, England, he had come to Canada in 1858 and was employed for some years as a meteorologist by the Grand Trunk Railway. It has been stated that he made a series of valuable experiments on the Victoria Bridge during its construction with instruments invented and manufactured by himself. However his princi-

pal interests seem to have been in the fields of art and literature. He was a founding member of The Montreal Sketching Club and its meetings were held at his home, 26 Beaver Hall Hill. In literature his special concern was Shakespeare as Osler stated in his story. He was an ardent collector of all works relating to Shakespeare and was one of the founders of the Montreal Shakespeare Club. In 1864, on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, he secured the endowment of a Shakespeare Gold Medal at McGill University. This award still exists; it is given annually to the graduating student who stands highest in the First Class Honours List of English Language and Literature, provided the Faculty so recommends to Senate. The Montreal Shakespeare Club called him "The father of Shakespearean study in Montreal." In an editorial in *The Gazette* published two days after his death, he was paid the still higher compliment of having been "perhaps the best Shakespearean scholar in Canada."



Thomas Davies King's book-plate in Osler's copy of Schmidt's *Shakespeare-Lexicon*.

After Mr. King's death in 1884, his splendid Shakespearean library was purchased by the Honorable Donald A. Smith and W.C. McDonald, Esq. (better known in later years as Lord Strathcona and Sir William Macdonald*) and presented to McGill University where it was added to the collections

The decorated letter which appears on this page is reproduced from *Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies, being a Reproduction in Facsimile of the First Folio Edition 1623... Oxford, 1902. Bibl. Osl. 5436.*

*In later years he changed his surname from McDonald to Macdonald.

in the Redpath Library. One of the items was of course Osler's copy of the first edition of Schmidt's *Shakespeare – Lexicon* which Mr. King had seized so avidly and retained in his personal library.

In August 1910, Osler, now Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, visited Montreal. Learning that Mr. King's books had come to McGill University, he went to the Redpath Library and asked to see his lost book. When it was brought to him, he inscribed in it the following note. "In 1875 I had a room with Mr. King, Beaver Hall Hill. When in Berlin in 1874** I had ordered the Schmidt's Lexicon. Knowing Mr. King's interest in everything Shakespearean I took it to him, and was delighted to see the eagerness and the joy with which he handled the book. *I never saw it again until this morning* (Aug. 15th, 1910). The old man avoided me for months. One day when he was ill I went upstairs to see him and on another occasion I made what he called a 'magnificent cure of his giddiness' by removing a bit of wax which was in contact with the drum of his ear; but he was never happy in my presence. He never spoke of the book, and I had not the heart to ask him for it. When his collection came to this Library my copy of Schmidt came with it, and I add this memorandum as an encouragement to elderly bibliophiles to appropriate the books of their good natured friends. Aug. 15th, 1910."

At the beginning of this article reference was made to Edgar Andrew Collard's story published in *The Gazette*, July 12th, 1975. As a consequence of the interest generated by Mr. Collard's story, Osler's "lost book" was located in the McLennan Library at McGill University, having been transferred there recently from the Redpath Library. Then, in December 1975, one hundred years after Osler received Schmidt's *Shakespeare – Lexicon* and, in the same day, lost it to Mr. King, the "lost book" was sent from the McLennan Library to the Osler Library. There it has joined its rightful companions in the magnificent collection which Osler bequeathed to McGill University. It is to be hoped that both Sir William Osler and Mr. King would approve.

E.H. Bensley

**Osler was mistaken in the year; it was 1873.

A WELCOME ACQUISITION

Earlier this year the Osler Library received a gift which deserves special mention – a copy of *Thirty Years in Moukden: 1883-1913: being the experiences and recollections of Dugald Christie, C.M.G., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.P. Edin.*, edited by his wife and published in 1914 by Constable and Company Limited, London, England. Dugald Christie was a medical missionary of the United Presbyterian (later United Free) Church of Scotland who, as the title indicates, served for thirty years in Moukden, the capital of Manchuria. The fly-leaf bears an inscription dated 1937 written by Mrs. Dugald Christie. Above this is another inscription dated March 4th, 1976 signed by Ronald V. Christie, presenting the volume to the Osler Library. As many readers of the *Newsletter* will know, Dr. Ronald V. Christie is an Emeritus Professor of Medicine at McGill University, a former Dean of the McGill Medical Faculty and a son of the Dugald Christie whose "experiences and recollections" are set forth in this book.

OSLER SOCIETY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Report for the academic year 1975-76

The Osler Society ended this year's proceedings with the annual banquet held on March 31st at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel; one hundred and twenty-three persons attended. We were pleased to have as our guest speaker Dr. William B. Bean, Kempner Professor and Director, Institute for the Medical Humanities, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston. Dr. Bean was introduced by this year's honorary president, Dr. C.P. Leblond of McGill's Department of Anatomy. Dr. Bean spoke on the life and career of Dr. Walter Reed. His talk was illustrated with slides which amplified his fascinating account of Reed's elucidation of the etiology of yellow fever, as well as showing various contemporary portraits of Dr. Reed. Among those present at the banquet were the four speakers who had presented topics at the regular meetings of the Osler Society over the past year – Winifred Osterman, Stephen Wener, Gavril Hercz and Alan Blum.

Ms. Winifred Osterman MDCM II had spoken on the topic "Mediaeval Leprosy: A Living Death?" She described the conditions under which lepers of that period lived and the reactions of western European mediaeval communities to the disease. These included the then current theological doctrines of leprosy as a manifestation of the will of the deity, and the practice in certain communities of treating lepers as persons already dead. The latter supposition was carried to the logical conclusion of distributing worldly goods and properties among survivors, abrogation of marriage and other civil contracts, and the performance of funeral rites to officially denote the change in status of the still living leper.

Mr. Stephen Wener MDCM II had spoken on the invention of the stethoscope and the spread of its use into general medical practice, in particular the difficulties in the introduction of the new invention across the channel from France to England. Mr. Wener's talk was enriched by several specimens of early and evolving stethoscopes from the collection of Dr. Harold N. Segall, leading up to those in use at the present time.

Mr. Gavril Hercz MDCM II, having recently visited Haiti, presented a commentary on the quality of health care available there as an example of the status and availability of health care in developing third world countries. Mr. Hercz's talk was accompanied by slides of the countryside, the people and typical existing health care facilities.

The speaker at the final regular meeting of the year was Dr. Alan Blum, a graduate of Emory University School of Medicine and currently an intern at the Royal Victoria Hospital. His topic was the influence of medicine on the poetic art of W.H. Auden. Dr. Blum's talk was an elaboration of an article entitled "The clinical art of poetry" which had appeared in *Medicine at Emory* in 1974. The origins of medical allusions in Auden's poetry and Auden's own view of medicine were traced to three major influences: his parents – his mother a nurse and his father a practising physician and professor of public health – the "clinical imagery" of T.S. Eliot, and the theories of Georg Groddeck, an early psychoanalyst and a contemporary of Freud.

John Michael Gawoski MDCM II
Co-Chairman, Osler Society 1975-76

WILDER GRAVES PENFIELD (1891-1976)

With the death of Dr. Wilder Penfield on April 5th, the Osler Library has lost one of its best friends. As a student of medical history, Dr. Penfield would have taken an interest in the Osler Library under any circumstances. But there was more, much more — a powerful influence immeasurably strengthening the bond between Wilder Penfield and the Library. Sir William Osler was one of Penfield's heroes. From the time of his first meeting with Osler at Oxford in 1914, when Penfield was a medical student, until his death more than sixty years later, Dr. Penfield repeatedly spoke and wrote of his great debt to Sir William. He also expressed his indebtedness to Osler in ways other than speaking and writing. One of those ways was his devotion to the welfare of the Osler Library.

Dr. Penfield was elected a Curator of the Osler Library at a meeting of the Board of Curators held in April 1954. From then until his death, a period of more than twenty years, he attended every meeting of that Board except for the last on March 31st, 1976 when, much to his expressed regret, illness kept him away. On one occasion he was invited to deliver an important address on the day of the meeting of the Osler Curators. He would not accept until he had been assured that the engagement would not interfere with his attendance at the meeting.

Dr. Penfield's services to the Osler Library were countless and an attempt at a mere listing would require a lengthy article. One outstanding example must suffice. During the preparation for the move of the Library from the Strathcona Medical Building to the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building and the move itself, the Library was without an Osler Librarian. It was a difficult time. At the request of the Faculty of Medicine, Dr. Penfield, although busy with other projects and already past seventy years of age, unhesitatingly accepted the post of Honorary Osler Librarian. As such he lent his experience and influence to the solution of many problems — some small, others far from small. Where the Osler Library was concerned, nothing was too trivial to engage his attention and nothing was too burdensome for him to undertake on its behalf.

Wilder Penfield more than justified his hero's confidence in him. Sir William Osler would have been proud of Dr. Penfield's career and grateful to him for his devoted care of the Osler Library.

E.H.B.

Reprinted, with minor changes, from the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*.

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CURATORS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The thirty-ninth meeting of the Board of Curators was held on March 31st, 1976. The gathering began informally at a coffee session in the W.W. Francis Seminar Room where the Curators had an opportunity to meet the Osler Library staff. At 11 a.m. Dr. R.F.P. Cronin, Chairman of the Board and Dean of the McGill Medical Faculty, called the meeting to order in the Osler Room of the Library. He extended a special welcome to Professor Archibald E. Malloch of McGill's English Department, a newly elected Curator, and Dr. William B. Bean, guest speaker at the Osler Banquet, who attended by invitation.

The Board was given details of a plan to establish an annual Osler Day at McGill University commencing in 1977. A prominent feature of the day is to be an Osler Lecture delivered by an internationally known figure on some subject relating to the health and welfare of mankind. The Osler Lecturer will be chosen by a committee representing a wide spectrum of University interests and the topic is to be such as to appeal to the McGill community at large. Other features of Osler Day will be the annual meeting of the Board of Curators of the Osler Library and the Osler Society Banquet.

Amongst other items considered, the Board received notice that Osler's tale of the Dismal Swamp had been published in the February 1976 issue of the *Osler Library Newsletter* and that Osler's autobiographical notes, appropriately edited, annotated and introduced, had been accepted for publication in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*. Permission to publish these two manuscripts had been granted by the Board at previous meetings.

Upon the receipt of the Librarian's Reports, the Board was gratified to learn of the generous financial support by the Friends, the gifts of books and manuscripts, and the continuing increase in the use of the Library by McGill students as well as by others.

The Board congratulated the Librarian, Philip M. Teigen, on the acceptance by the Department of the History of Science of the University of Wisconsin, Madison of his Ph.D. dissertation, "Richard Seymer's *Golden workes of phisecke & surgury* (ca. 1576): An edition with introduction and glossary."

FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The appeal to the Friends for the 1975-76 academic year concluded at the end of May and the Library is very gratified to receive the \$3137 contributed by 206 Friends. The following have been added to the list of Friends since it was last published.

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