

OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

NO. 37 - JUNE 1981

REVERE OSLER AND JACK SLESSOR



One of the last living links with the Osler family from the period of their sojourn in England has finally been severed with the death in July 1979 of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor. Son of the then Steward of Christ Church (Sir William's own college at Oxford), Jack Slessor was raised in the same academic ambience as his contemporary, Revere. He was actually the junior by some eighteen months, yet the two boys enjoyed a lifelong friendship that began at the Dragon School locally and continued until the untimely death of Revere in 1917.

Even when parted from one another at their secondary schools, they still remained "inseparable companions" during the holidays; so close indeed was their relationship that Jack became the youngest "latch-keyer" at 13 Norham Gardens, and was to write many years later that he "adored" the Osler parents. Perhaps it was he who pencilled the caricature of Revere on a beam in the attic playroom — still very clearly to be seen, indelible after more than seventy years!

The death of his childhood friend had a deep and lasting effect on Jack Slessor, who subsequently included in his memoirs, *These Remain: a personal anthology*, Michael Joseph, London, 1969, a vivid and detailed account of "Tommy", as Revere was called by his friends, and of his many gifts and fine qualities. He recalled there, half a century later, that he was a "very, very special sort of boy" to whose loss — above all his intimates who were killed on the battlefields — "I have never been able to reconcile myself".

In personal correspondence with the writer of this brief notice, Sir John maintained that, had Revere lived, "he would have been a great man", achieving prominence in some unusual field. That unfulfilled speculation was happily translated into reality in the circumstances of his own career, which was one of great distinction. Overcoming serious physical handicaps, he survived the First World War as a combat pilot, and went on to give indispensable service to the Allied cause throughout the Second, ultimately rising to the highest rank in the Royal Air Force.

The Oslers would have been the first to appreciate the fact that Jack Slessor's greatest contribution to victory in 1945 was the crucial role that he played in creating and implementing Anglo-American strategy in the air.

Nicholas Dewey
Church Enstone,
Oxford, England

The historiated letter on this page is taken from Hippocrates, *Prognostica* (Basel, 1568; Bibl. Osl. 157)

GRANT TO PROMOTE INTEREST IN THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

The Medical Faculty of McGill University has been awarded an annual grant of \$2,000 for a period of five years to support lectures, seminars, and other related activities designed to promote interest in the history of medicine. This grant comes from Associated Medical Services Incorporated of Toronto, Ontario, on the recommendation of the President of its Board, Dr. J.B. Neilson, and the Executive Director of the Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine, Dr. G.R. Paterson. The use of the grant will be under the jurisdiction of the Thomas Cotton Professor of the History of Medicine, Dr. Don G. Bates.

A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CASEY ALBERT WOOD

Miss Effie C. Astbury, a former Director of the McGill School of Library Science, has compiled an excellent bio-bibliography of Casey Albert Wood (1856-1942). This has been published as Occasional Paper no. 7 of the Graduate School of Library Science, McLennan Library Building, McGill University. For many years it has been widely recognized that such a bio-bibliography was badly needed. The problem was to find someone able and willing to undertake the tremendous amount of work involved. Our indebtedness to Miss Astbury is great indeed. Her compilation is especially appreciated in the Osler Library. From the standpoint of gifts of books and manuscripts, Casey Wood was one of the greatest benefactors of the Osler Library, perhaps in this respect ranking second only to Sir William Osler himself.

CUSHING'S LIFE OF OSLER

Many believe that Cushing's biography of Sir William Osler is out of print and can therefore be obtained only through second-hand booksellers. In fact the two-volume set was reprinted as recently as 1977 and copies are available from the publisher, The Oxford University Press. It can be ordered in Canada through the Toronto office of The Press (70 Wynford Drive, Don Mills, Ontario, M3C 1J9) and in the United States through The Customer Service Department of The Press (16-00 Pollitt Drive, Fair Lawn, New Jersey, 17410).

ARCHIVES OF THE AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY

At its annual meeting last May, the American Osler Society announced that its archives will be deposited in the Osler Library. At the same time, Miss Marilyn Fransisyn of the staff of the Osler Library was appointed Honorary Archivist of the Society.

1981 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The 81st Annual Meeting of the Medical Library Association was held in Montreal May 29 – June 4, 1981, with Mrs. Frances Groen, Life Sciences Area Librarian, McGill University, as National Program Chairman. Most of the proceedings were at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel but, on one evening, Dr. Philip Teigen, Osler Librarian, was host to the History of Medicine Section in the Osler Library.

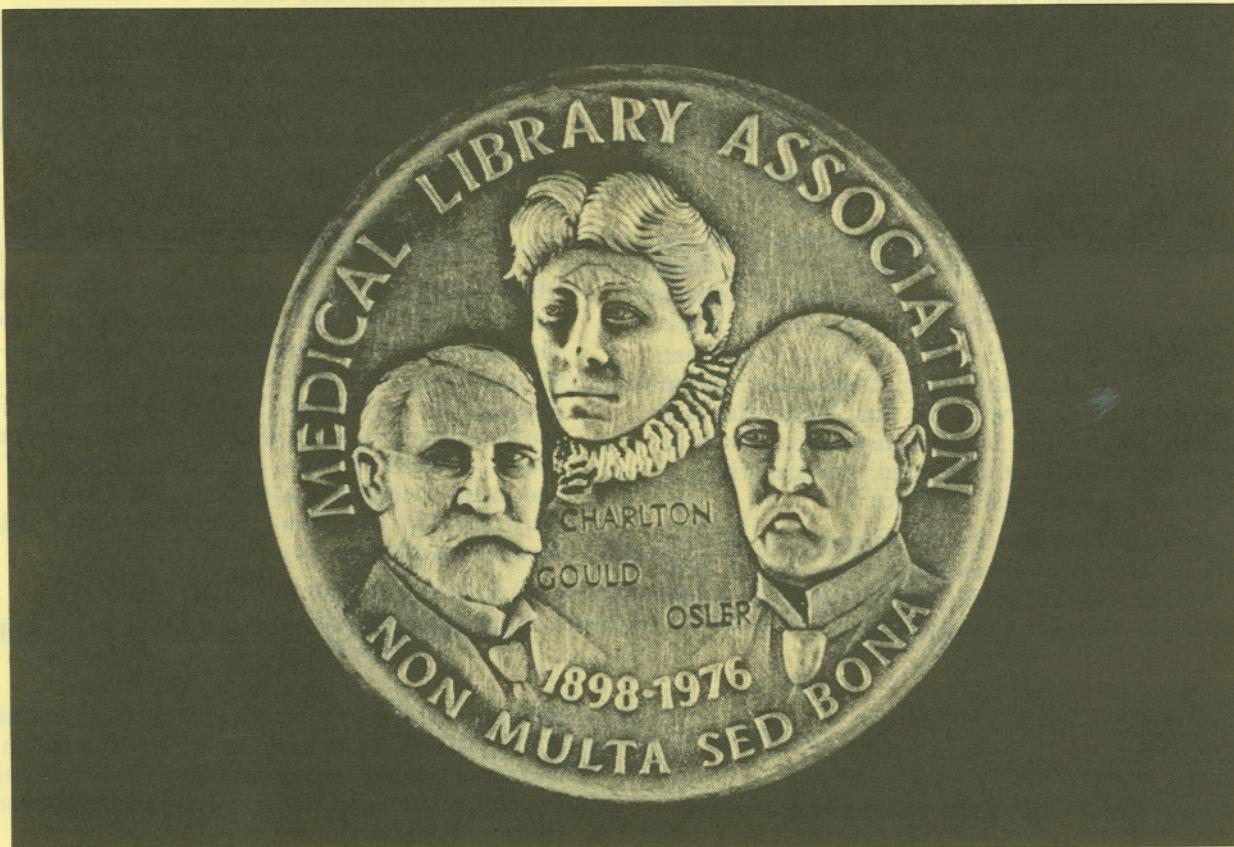
This meeting brought back at least two memories involving the Osler Library. In June of 1930 the Medical Library Association met in the Strathcona Medical Building of McGill University and a part of the program was a tour of the recently opened Osler Library and a talk about the Osler Collection by the Osler Librarian, Dr. W.W. Francis. The other memory related to Dr. Francis as President of the Association in 1936. His Presidential Address was entitled "Margaret Charlton and the early days of the Medical Library Association (*Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 25:58-63, 1936). Miss Charlton had been Assistant Librarian of the McGill Medical Library from 1896 to 1914, and, along with William Osler and George M. Gould, had played a leading role in the formation of the Association, of which she became the first Secretary. The roles of these three were recognized in 1976 by the issue of a commemorative medal, the obverse of which is shown in the accompanying illustration. It is clear from these aspects of its history that the Medical Library Association should feel quite at home in Montreal.

DEDICATION OF BETHUNE PLAQUE AND PAINTING

On March 3, 1981, Bernard Roy, Chairman of the Board of the Hospital Centre, Royal Victoria Hospital, and Mary Weil, Past President of the Bethune Foundation, officiated at the formal dedication of a Norman Bethune Plaque, presented to the Hospital by the Bethune Foundation. At the same time an oil painting by Bethune was formally presented to the Hospital by Raymond Boyer. Lui Min, Chargé d'Affaires of the Canadian Embassy of the People's Republic of China, was in attendance. For the occasion the Osler Library mounted a small exhibit of its Bethuniana in the lobby of the Hospital's Medical Pavilion.

The Bethune plaque faces that of John McCrae on the opposite side of the main lobby and is surmounted by a framed photograph of Bethune in the uniform of the Canadian Blood Transfusion Unit in Spain. The inscription on the plaque lists the highlights of Bethune's career and contains a stanza of Bethune's poem "Red Moon." The oil painting, hanging in the Hospital Library, shows an operation in progress in an old RVH operating theatre, now no longer in existence.

Marilyn Fransisyn
Reference and Manuscripts Librarian
Osler Library



Commemorative medal of the Medical Library Association

THE OSLER SOCIETY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Report for the Academic Year 1980-81

This academic year saw the 274th and 275th meetings of the Osler Society. Dr. Samuel O. Freedman, Dean of the McGill Faculty of Medicine, was the Guest of Honour at the Annual Osler Banquet held April 22, 1981.

On February 4, at our first wine and cheese, Dr. Don Bates, Chairman of the Department of Humanities and Social Studies in Medicine, gave a delightful talk, "Thomas Sydenham - A 17th Century Physician: A biographical sketch followed by a slide - talk about my vacation on his estate in Dorset, England". The rolling green English countryside provided a well-needed contrast to the bleak Montreal winter; the taste of wine and talk of history filled out the rest of the evening.

On March 18, Dr. Robert Oseasohn, Chairman of the Department of Epidemiology and Health, discussed his travels during the summer of 1980 through Peking, Canton, Shanghai, and smaller coastal Chinese villages. In his talk, "A Trip to China", Dr. Oseasohn and his wife provided a fascinating view of Chinese health, and the emphasis on preventive medicine. The discussion which followed ranged from more serious subjects such as acupuncture to the more light-hearted showing of some Panda bear slides.

The Annual Osler Banquet was held at the McGill Faculty Club. Dr. Samuel O. Freedman provided a unique view of medicine, from the eyes of a small boy following his physician-father on house calls through the streets of Montreal past, on through the speaker's time as Dean. The Honorary President, Dr. Donald Lawrence, Professor in the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, presented a copy of Osler's *A Way of Life* to the Second Year Class President (and Co-Chairman of this year's banquet) Brian Greffe, representing the presentation to be made to all second year class members later. Dr. Lawrence noted the special honour he felt at serving in this capacity, as twenty-five years ago he was Chairman of the Thirty-Fifth Anniversary Osler Banquet, when the Special Guest of Honour was Dr. W.W. Francis. The honour was indeed ours at having two such fine guests at our banquet. As with each year the Loving Cup Toast brought all to their feet, and a hearty singing of "Our Regius Prof" brought to a close another banquet and year.

Brian S. Greffe MDCM II
Kevin A. Sevarino MDCM III
Co-Chairmen, The Osler Society, 1980-81

OSLER'S DREAMS

An account of Sir William Osler's dreams has appeared in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 54: 418-446, 1980. This account was edited, annotated, and introduced by Dr. Charles G. Roland, Hannah Professor of the History of Medicine at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. The bulk of the material presented came from manuscripts in the Osler Library and publication was authorized by the Board of Curators of the Library.

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF FRENCH MEDICINE

The Osler Library of McGill University has recently received a three-year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under its "Programme for the Strengthening of Specialized Collections," in order to purchase books published in France. The books will illustrate the social history of French medicine from the beginning of the French Revolution until the beginning of World War I.

The purpose of the Council's programme "is to develop specialized collections of national significance in Canadian university libraries." The precise title of the Osler Library's grant application was "An Acquisitions Programme for Printed Works Illustrating the Social History of Medicine in France, 1789-1914." The works the Library will purchase fall into three categories: a) Ones dealing with medical institutions, such as hospitals, medical schools, professional organizations, and their social, political, and legal ramifications; b) Ones dealing with governmental agencies (including departmental and municipal ones) and their relations to, funding of, and regulation of, physicians, health care, and public health; c) Ones dealing with popular attitudes towards medical practice, the medical profession, and medical institutions.

The Osler Library chose to develop this particular area for several reasons. On the one hand, there has been little systematic development in libraries of this subject; on the other, historical scholarship has begun to take a detailed interest in the social history of French medicine. The period between the French Revolution and World War I was chosen because medical institutions as well as medical science were revolutionized during that period.

As a foundation for this new material, the Library already holds significant materials for studying the history of French medical science and practice. For example, it has large holdings of such medical scientists as F.X. Bichat, R.T.L. Laennec, Claude Bernard, Louis Pasteur, and C.L.A. Laveran, to mention only a few. The Library's holdings of these and other major scientific and clinical figures come partly from Sir William Osler's bequest and partly from transfers made to the Osler Library by the McGill Medical Library.

A JAPANESE TRIBUTE TO OSLER

The February 1981 issue of *The Canadian Numismatic Journal* contains an account by Dr. R.L. Golden of a William Osler medal designed by Dr. Masakazu Abe of Jikei Medical College, Tokyo. Attention is drawn to this in the *Newsletter* because most Oslerians are unlikely to be familiar with *The Canadian Numismatic Journal*. Those wishing detailed information about this Japanese tribute to Osler should communicate with Dr. Golden, 56 Laurel Hill Road, Centerport, N.Y. 11721.

FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The appeal to the Friends for the 1980-81 academic year concluded at the end of May and the Library is gratified to have received about \$6,600 contributed by 267 Friends. Most of the contributions have come from Friends in Canada and the United States of America. However, very welcome contributions have come also from Friends in Australia, Denmark, England, India, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Trinidad, and West Germany. The Library acknowledges with thanks the support of all its Friends. The following have been added to the list since the publication of the February *Newsletter*.

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The appeal for the 1981-82 academic year will be made in the October *Newsletter*.

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

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