

OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

No. 46 - June 1984



THE CLOSE LINKS BETWEEN THE OSLERS AND THE HOWARDS

IN JULY 1949, the *Archives of Internal Medicine* published a special "Sir William Osler Memorial Number" dedicated to Osler in celebration of the hundredth anniversary of his birth and as a salute to his memory. One of the contributors was R. Palmer Howard,

then on the staffs of the Montreal General Hospital and McGill University.¹ Howard included in his article the following note on the close links between the Oslers and the Howards.

Robert Palmer Howard, professor of the theory and practice of medicine at McGill in Osler's student days and dean of the Faculty from 1882 to 1889, was my grandfather. Such a personal bond of friendship existed between the two men that Osler was chosen in 1877 to be godfather to my father, Campbell Palmer Howard. In due time my father became one of Osler's housemen at Johns Hopkins Hospital; he was forever inspired by him. Osler's son, Revere, was my father's godson, and, in turn, was named my godfather; his untimely death as a combatant officer in the first world war put a sad end to this interlocking chain of devoted friendship and professional inheritance.

Now, more than 30 years later, R. Palmer Howard has become the author of a book² which relates the fascinating details of the links between the Oslers and the Howards, links which involved the women as well as the men of the two families. The author has drawn liberally on published sources, including, of course, Cushing's biography of Sir William Osler. In addition, a very significant addition, Howard has made use of a large collection of letters from William Osler to Campbell Howard and Campbell's wife, Otilie, and to Campbell Howard's sister. Also the author has studied the correspondence between William Osler and Principal Peterson of McGill University and miscellaneous documents in the McGill and University of Iowa archives. Needless to say, the resources of the Osler Library were placed freely at his disposal. The greater part of all this material has not been published previously.

The book is especially revealing in its description of the relationship between the Oslers and the author's father, Campbell Howard, whose "medical education and career were stimulated and guided by his godfather, William Osler." Even Campbell Howard's personal life was happily influenced by Osler. It was through the Oslers that Campbell met Otilie Wright, who became his wife. Otilie was a daughter of Dr. Henry P. Wright, who, as a medical student, had shared rooms with Osler in Montreal in 1870-71.

It is entirely natural that, in reading Palmer Howard's book, I should be especially intrigued by the many references to Campbell Howard. It was he who first introduced me to William Osler more than 50 years ago. During my medical undergraduate course at the University of Toronto, I had heard passing references to Osler, but no more than that. I had not even used his famous text, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*. In 1930, I came to Montreal and that autumn I spent three months as a junior intern on Campbell Howard's service at the Montreal General Hospital. I clearly recall the occasion on which he introduced me to Osler and, incidentally, to the close links between the Oslers and the Howards; it took the form of a well-deserved rebuke. Dr. Howard was planning a teaching session to be illustrated by a case of typhoid fever. He requested that the sheets of the temperature chart be fixed to the wall or upon some suitable frame in proper sequence so the entire course to date could be viewed readily. Then he added "that is how The Chief did it." In my innocence I asked whom he meant by "The Chief." Dr. Howard's face reddened and his expression conveyed both annoyance and disbelief. Then he blurted "Osler, of course." Not long afterwards, I came across the following rather irreverent lines penned by some rhymester who has remained anonymous:

When William Osler came to die
He left one man empowered
To keep unblurred his lightest word
'Twas Campbell Palmer Howard³

Thus was my interest aroused in William Osler and the relationships between the Osler and Howard families, an interest which has grown steadily over the years and has been enhanced and enriched by my long friendship with the author of *The Chief: Doctor William Osler*.

The initial letter on this page and the vignette on the last page are reproduced from *Le Livre Moderne: Revue du Monde littéraire et des Bibliophiles contemporains*, publiée par Octave Uzanne, Paris, vol. 1, 1890 (*Bibl. Osl.* 7169)

OSLER SOCIETY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Report for the Academic Year 1983-84

This contribution to the *Newsletter* is not a review of Palmer Howard's book. Indeed it is not my policy as editor to publish book reviews. Instead it is a highly personal appreciation of an aspect of the book important to me. But it would be unfair to Palmer Howard to suggest that the close links between the Oslers and the Howards constitute his main theme. On page 18 he states correctly that "the author's central purpose is to show the unusually powerful influence William Osler exerted on the pupils he trained throughout his long medical career," young men and women at McGill, Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins, Oxford and elsewhere, who, like Campbell Howard, called him "The Chief." It is enough for me to say that Palmer Howard achieved his end.

Finally, I cannot resist mentioning the illustrations, most of which have not been published before. They include a priceless photograph of an Easter egg-hunt at 13 Norham Gardens (Figure 42). In the foreground is the author, aged three years, with his sister, and in the background can be seen Lady Osler, Revere Osler, and Thomas Archibald Malloch.

1. R. Palmer Howard, "William Osler: 'A potent ferment' at McGill," *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 1949, **84**: 12-15.

2. R. Palmer Howard, *The Chief: Doctor William Osler*, Science History Publications, U.S.A., a division of Watson Publishing International, P.O. Box 493, Canton, MA 02021, 1983.

3. E.H. Bensley, "My introduction to the Montreal General Hospital," *Montreal General Hospital News*, 1971, **11**, no. 1:12-14.

Edward H. Bensley

"THE OSLER LIBRARY AND YOU . . ."

Enclosed with this June 1984 *Newsletter* is a brochure entitled "The Osler Library and you . . ." It outlines briefly the history of the Library, with special emphasis on the growth made possible over the years through bequests and gifts. For the Library to continue to grow and flourish, continuing financial support is needed. Suggestions are made of areas to which donations and bequests can be directed.

OSLER LIBRARY RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

A reminder

The February 1984 issue of the *Newsletter* contained an announcement of the establishment of this Fellowship Program, intended to serve scholars and librarians who need to obtain temporary residence in Montreal in order to undertake research in the Osler Library. Prospective applicants are reminded that they should contact Philip M. Teigen, Osler Librarian, 3655 Drummond Street, Montreal, Quebec, H3G 1Y6, for applications which are due to be returned **before 1 October, 1984**. Anyone interested who has not a copy of the February 1984 issue of the *Newsletter*, with its detailed description of the program, can obtain one by writing the Osler Librarian.

The sixty-second year of the Osler Society was one of diversity. We began in October with sponsorship of an encore performance of *Willie: A Dream, a dramatic monologue portraying Sir William Osler*, written and performed by Dr. Joseph Lella, Chairman of the Department of Humanities and Social Studies in Medicine at McGill University. (See the Society's report in the June 1983 issue of the *Newsletter*.)

Osler's wish that medical education encompass an awareness of the context, historical and social, in which medicine exists, was reflected by the activities of the Osler Society again this year. In November we learned of the events shaping the development of cardiac pacemakers as Professor L.A. Geddes from Purdue University, Indiana, presented an illustrated story from the first efforts to the refinement of modern pacemakers.

In February we enjoyed being taken back in time at a seminar entitled "Reflections on Medical Practice in the early 20th Century." The panel, consisting of Drs. J.B. Scriver, H.N. Segall, and F.N. Gurd, described the life of the medical practitioner of the time.

Later in February we were pleased to have as our guest Dr. J.D. Stoeckle, the Master of the Richard Cabot Society of Harvard Medical School and Director of Primary Care at the Massachusetts General Hospital. We learned of the past and present of the Cabot Society, as well as its philosophical roots in the ideals of Dr. Cabot, a maverick pioneer of preventive medicine and primary health care.

In March a joint presentation of the film "Whose life is it anyway?" was held in conjunction with the first year medical ethics group.

The year ended on a high note with the traditional Osler Lecture and Banquet. Our Osler Lecturer was The Right Honourable Dr. David Owen, leader of the Social Democratic Party of Britain. Dr. Owen graduated in medicine at St. Thomas's Hospital in London in 1962 and entered politics a few years later. His lecture, entitled "Medicine, Morality, and the Market," centred on the socio-politico-economic forces that influence the practice of medicine. He stressed that continued clinical freedom will require doctors to be more active in dealing with limits of resources.* There was a full house and a convivial atmosphere at the following banquet. The Honorary President, Dr. Martin Entin, had some inspiring words for the medical students; Dr. Owen was asked for his prescription for the ills of medicine; and we were filled with the spirit (actually the port) of the occasion as Oslerian tradition was re-enacted.

Next year promises to be a very active one with the re-creation of an "official" membership (which existed from 1921-1969) and the old "constitution" now adapted to a useful guideline for future years.

*Dr. Owen's lecture has been published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, vol. 130, pp. 1341-1345, May 15, 1984.

Anthony Garami MDCM II
Bernard Brais MDCM III
Co-Chairmen, Osler Society, 1983-84

THE CURRENT OSLER LIBRARY EXHIBIT

Taste and Quality in Galenic Pharmacology

This exhibit was prepared for the 1984 meeting of the American Institute for the History of Pharmacy and will remain in place until the end of August. It displays wood-cut pictures, some of them coloured, from Medieval and Renaissance herbals, and some facsimiles of manuscripts and printed books.

Among herbs illustrated are licorice, saffron, spinach, and poppy, all of which were important not only in the medical writing of the Greco-Roman physician Claudius Galen (129-ca.210) but also to physicians of Medieval and Renaissance Europe. In this long-lived pharmacology, qualities and properties of drugs were tested by taste, just as wine today is evaluated.

The first part of the exhibit illustrates and sets out information about important herbs used in medicine until the end of the Renaissance. The second part of the exhibit focuses on one herb, the poppy, by providing different pictures of the plant showing how a variety of herbalists viewed and represented the same plant.

Philip M. Teigen
Janet Sader

A WELCOME ACQUISITION

Dr. Earl F. Nation has presented to the Osler Library a copy of *Black's Medical Dictionary*, 4th edition, edited by John D. Comrie, M.A., B.Sc., M.B., F.R.C.P. Edinburgh, and published in 1910 by Adam and Charles Black, London. This copy was given to William Osler by the editor, Dr. Comrie of Edinburgh, and contains a gracious handwritten note from Comrie to Osler dated October 8th, 1910. Apparently, Osler did not add the book to his library. Instead, he sent it to T. Archibald Malloch, whose close associations with Osler, the *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, and the Osler Library were described in a previous *Osler Library Newsletter* (no. 36, February 1981). Now, through the kindness of Dr. Nation, it has joined Osler's books in the Osler Library.

A CORRECTION

The leading article in the February 1984 issue of the *Newsletter* was entitled "Osler in Japan." Its author was Dr. Shigeaki Hinohara. At the beginning of the second paragraph of that article, Dr. Hinohara named the late Dr. Riichiro (Hezekiah) Suzuki as the only person in Japan who had been a pupil of William Osler. Dr. Hinohara has informed us that Suzuki was incorrect; the name should have been Saiki.

FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The appeal to the Friends for the 1983-84 academic year concluded at the end of May and the Library is grateful to have received about \$13,200 contributed by 300 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 Australia, Britain, Chile, Denmark, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, 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 1984-85 academic year will be made in the October *Newsletter*.

