



OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGill University, Montreal, Canada

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William Osler and Marjorie



ight of my later Life – adorable superba. Absent from thee my heart languishes and I feel so desolated that neither my work nor my play has any joy in it. With you and in your presence the smallest trifles of life are

full of abiding happiness. That day you remember when I had a bad oyster at dinner – your sympathetic glance alone gave me courage to swallow it. What could I not do under the greater exigences of life if only your guiding hand was always near. Your devoted Egerton.

That was Osler's tongue-in-cheek letter of 1905 to a young woman. Osler represented the same lady in two of his dreams, as related by Charles Roland. A dream probably experienced in 1911 was recorded by William as follows: "... I have had extraordinary dreams the past month but singularly unsuccessful in remembering. Some of shocking improbability yet I was not the least surprised. M.'s husband was her father P.H. who was just going off on a trip. He had the same relation to me as of old. We saw him in the cab and went back to the house, when M. began to make love to me in a most improper manner."

Who was this "M" who played a part in Osler's dreams and correspondence? Well – she was my mother, as many of the readers of this article may already have guessed.

Gwendolyn Marjorie Howard was born in Montreal in 1882 to Robert Palmer Howard. He was an older friend of Osler's and was his Professor at McGill. Marjorie's parents had both died by the time she was ten; thereafter she lived a peripatetic, cosmopolitan life, with Montreal as a base. Her contacts were broadened by her half-brother Jared Howard's marriage to the daughter of a Canadian millionaire, Lord Strathcona.

Marjorie's travels saw her frequently at the Osler's house, in Baltimore until 1905 and Oxford thereafter. Osler felt some responsibility to the orphaned children of his respected teacher. His attachment to Marjorie's brother Campbell Howard was related in Palmer Howard's *The Chief*. Marjorie's good looks and personality made her a welcome visitor, as she played her part in the entertainment of the many young people who frequented the Oslers' "Open Arms."

Ninety-four letters from William Osler were found in Marjorie's possessions at her death. They were dated from 1904 to 1919. With them was a note stating: "Letters from

Doccie O. I only found these after Cushing's *Life* was published." The letters were devoted entirely to family matters. Palmer Howard's dating of the letters when he was preparing *The Chief* greatly facilitated this commentary. In excerpting them, I illustrate Osler's enjoyment of younger people – in this case a woman 33 years his junior.



Marjorie Howard at the time of her engagement to Thomas B. Fletcher, 1909.

A letter of 1905 from Oxford was addressed to "Dear D." (for Darling) and refers to Strathcona's Scottish west coast island of Colonsay and the children of Marjorie's half-brother Jared Howard.

Tis not nice here at all without you – the house is lovely and we miss you so much. What a delightful time we had together at Colonsay! how glad I am that we went. and it is so nice for you to have such dear children to love and be beloved, until you have your own eight or ten – all called after the lost loves! What a happy thought! only do not tell Vic. [a suitor of Marjorie's] ... Love to them all. Tell Arthur that I will meet him some day in the middle of Picadilly Circus, and will arrange to have a punching match with Harry in the centre of Lincoln Fields. Yours W. O.

Osler, later in 1905 and again referring to Margaret and Jared Howard, parodied the formal invitation of the day:

The Regius Professor of Medicine (known familiarly as Reggie) presents his compliments to Miss Marjorie Howard and requests for himself the pleasure of his company at luncheon with her and her family at 51 Queen Anne Street on Friday, if the Hon. M. and Mr. R.J.B. would be glad to see him. A line sent care of Dr. Hale White, 65 Harley St., would delight her faithful but neglected adorer.

Osler kept himself informed of Marjorie's admirers and sometimes raised defenses against them. In January, 1906, referring to a beau who was a resident of Halifax, he wrote:

... Please do not get into the Halifax habit – I am sure the climate is not good for you and after you have seen Vic and had (1) one sinistral, (2) two dextral, and (3) ambidextral hugs, hurry to Norham Gardens.... Yours Reggie

Marjorie's engagement to "Vic" was soon broken and William wrote "Dearest Missus" from New York:

Now what are you to do! You cannot possibly stay on this side and twist your fingers and leave your arms unexercised! You must come to Oxford where you can keep up your practice on poor Reggie and the Rhodesians. [the Rhodes Scholars]

Marjorie drowned any sorrows by spending several months in Germany with her brother Campbell, who was capping off his medical training. In January, 1907, Osler wrote "Dear Darling," now aged 25:

... What a good time you've had in Berlin – did I not tell you so? Please be careful of Munsterberg – 'twould never do. What a desolation you are!We have not seen any of the boys – but on Sunday they will be at the New House – the Open Arms or the Always Inn.

And two weeks later Osler counselled "Dearest M." further regarding the suitor Munsterberg:

Do not, I implore you! succumb to von M's pertinacity! But perhaps he is very nice! I do not like German husbands for English or American girls. What a desolation you are. Do hurry home – all the boys are longing to see you. Good old Manger is so sweet. I really

Originally presented as a paper at the annual meeting of the American Osler Society on May 8 of this year in Baltimore. A fuller version of Dr. Fletcher's account of Osler and Marjorie is scheduled to appear in the winter edition of the *Transactions and Studies* of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.

wish you could marry him in May from No. 13. I would give you away – in many directions.... Yours. W. Reggie Davis

Marjorie evaded both Munsterberg and Manger. For two years she kept house for her brother Campbell in Montreal. In March, 1909, Osler wrote "Dearest M." from Florence, Italy concerning her prospective voyage to England:

Delighted to hear that we may be on the same shipJune 18th is the date – so secure a berth. Can. Pac. [Canadian Pacific] We are having a very happy time here – wonderful city – too many madonnas. Tell Campbell they come in 4 groups – the healthy, the anaemic, the chlorotic and the rachitic. Yours ever. W. O.

Thomas B. Futcher's visit to England the summer of 1909 coincided with Marjorie's. A graduate of Toronto, Thomas had been a chief medical resident under Osler in the latter 90s and had remained in Baltimore to practice. He and Marjorie had met there. Now 38 (Marjorie was 27), he was apparently a somewhat diffident suitor and needed encouragement from the Oslers to pursue her. Their courtship was apparently in disarray when Osler wrote "Angel" during the summer:

What a double-dyed fool I was not to have spoken to T. B. He has had a cold chill – such as come over us men at times. He really cares very much but had the stage fright. But what a deuce of a mess we are in. But two things are clear (1) he is attached to you. (2) he is a good man – whom you could make better – and I may add (3) I believe you could be happy and safe with him. But talk it out with your own heart my darling. Your loving Dad

Thomas successfully bagged his quarry on the island of Colonsay. Osler wrote "Dearest Marjorie" in late August, 1909: *Deelighted. I knew all would go well. You have a good man, not quite as good as yours devotedly, but with possibilities under your guidance. You are just the girl for him, "such a good business woman"! That brought him. I knew it would. We really managed very well. Just one regret – Campbell [Howard] and poor old Bill [Francis]! I fear B is hard hit! tho you do not think so. It could not be otherwise. Hurry home to yours devotedly W. O.*

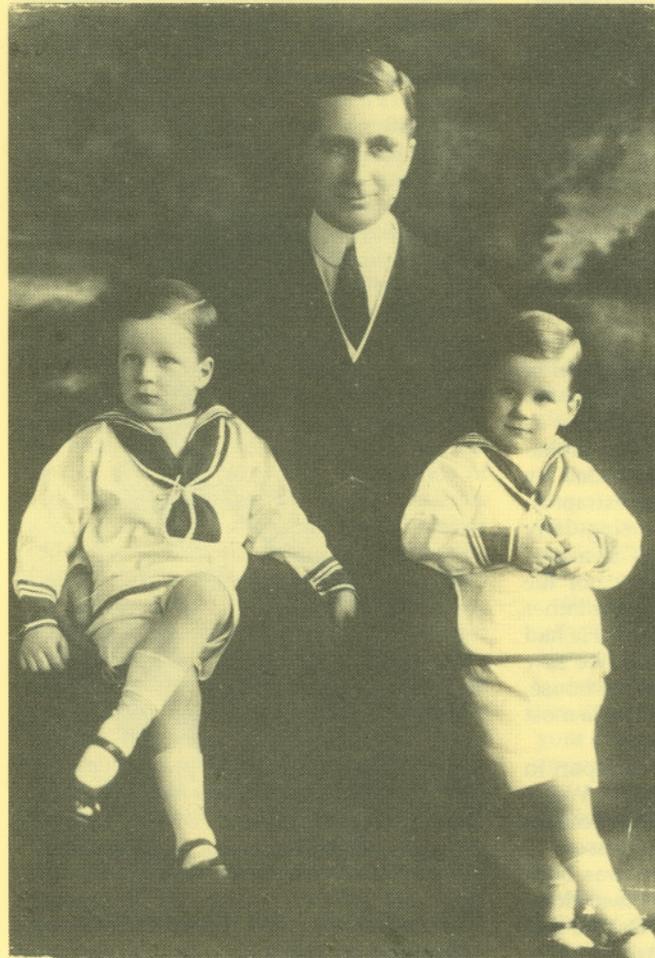
Marjorie and Thomas were married in November, 1909. Thereafter Osler conducted a long-distance obstetrical and pediatric practice. One wonders if he fantasized Thomas Futcher as his proxy in the evolution of a young family. In February, 1910, "Dearest Marjorie" was pregnant when William wrote her:

Tis simply scandalous ... Isaphaena must not arrive until the 1st week of September. But is it not delightful – morning sickness and all. I know you would give Eve points. If she could only be twins – two girls Chichestina and Isaphaena. Perhaps she is. Grace is so excited ... Just to think when I see you it will be

with twins ... What is most ominous is the twin tail of this new comet. [Halley's] So lay in a double supply of baby-linen ... Your loving Dad.

In March, 1910, "My dearest Little Missus" was informed:

Here are two of the earliest from your pansy bed – one for Isaphaena the other for Thomas Palmer Howard – Place one on the right side, the other on the left attached with pink ribbon for the boy, blue for the girl and it will soothe



Thomas B. Futcher and his two sons, Thomas Bruce Futcher (right) and Palmer Howard Futcher (left).

them and prevent all intrauterine quarrelling. [One of the two pansies is preserved with the letter.] I have known this most helpful in arthritis, morning sickness, obesity and all sub-diaphragmatic troubles in the newly married. Your loving Dad.

A letter of August, 1910, to "Dearest Marjorie" at the end of a voyage, commented on an episode of Osler's urinary lithiasis:

Very good trip, but not so nice as that of last year when we did the business of T.B.F.... I have kept pretty quiet. There have been rumblings as if another chip may be breaking off Gibraltar.... I am dying to see you and the twins. I do hope they will arrive before we leave. Mention the date of our sailing to

them. By this time they must be friendly little souls.... Your loving Dad.

On September 14, 1910, a day after I was born, Osler wrote to "Dearest Marjorie":

It was a great delight to have the cable. We began to fear lest there had been a mistake and that it was all fat. DO be careful now – do not let the modern Doctor get you up too soon ... I am afraid you will have to adopt a puppy to keep the "White Mountains" as Revere calls them from bursting. Your loving Dad.

"Darling Lactea" was addressed in October, 1910:

We just talk of you and Palmer all the time and I very nearly take the steamer every Saturday. Your letters are splendid and we love to hear details – weight, girth, pinkness of the toes, color of eyes, teeth – hair, is it black and has he much – is it (hair) rubbing off already ... Are there beads on his ribs? TBF will be watching for all these things. I do hope he pukes easily – 'tis such a good sign. Your loving Dad.

And Osler through 1919 continued warmly about Marjorie's expanding nursery, transmitting invitations to visit Oxford. Here are two of Osler's many admonitions that the newly wedded Futchers save money. Thus to Marjorie in January, 1910:

Now read Tom Futcher this part – (1) Has he his life insurance? Just do it this week. (2) Like good children begin to save money this year – well within your income from the start. Remember the

character I gave you – as a good business woman! and you are.

And in November, 1910:

Have you saved any money yet for the baby – Do be careful children – now in the days of your prosperity. We are saving to buy a farm for Isaac [Revere] – he will never do anything at books.

Sadness finally came to both the Osler and Futcher families. After Revere Osler died of wounds on August 29, 1917, William wrote "Dearest Marjorie" on August 31:

The dear Laddie has gone and we are left heart-broken ... We knew it would come ...

In turn my brother Bruce Futchler age 7, died of influenza in November, 1918. Thomas had just returned from a year with a Canadian Army Hospital in Britain. Osler wrote "Dearest Marjorie and Tom" immediately:

*Our hearts are just aching for you ... What a calamity to have to part with the dear boy!
... How fortunate Tom was home ... Poor dears
- 'tis a wound that never can heal.... How I wish we were with you. Ah me! these are sad days - no peace in our hearts. [The Armistice had just been declared.] With deepest love.
Affectionately your old Doccie O.*

In December, 1918, it was:

*You and Tom are in our thoughts always!
What a calamity to lose such a darling - and what a fine fellow he would have been. One of the tragedies about dear Isaac [Revere Osler] is the loss he will be to all the younger ones - your darlings and Otilie [Howard] and others. He would have been so helpful with his good sense, and sympathetic heart ... Love to you all
Your loving Doccie O.*

Osler was 70 and in the grip of the pulmonary infection to which he was to succumb on December 29, 1919, when he wrote "Dearest Marjorie" three weeks before his death:

How I wish I could be translated to Calvert [Street, the Futchler's residence] just to play with you and the three darlings for a few weeks... T.B. will have had my letter. Devil of an attack - nearly blew the lid off. Worried poor Grace sadly, I have never had such a cough. I am still coughing. I believe the whole business has been senile whooping cough; sent to remind me that second childhood is at hand. Yours ever. Doccie O.

Thereafter, the Futchers prospered in large houses in Baltimore until the Depression of the 1930s. Then William Osler's frugal spirit must have sighed "I told them so" when they sustained serious financial worries. Thomas died in 1938; Marjorie survived as a widow till 1969, aged 87.

In retrospect, Marjorie had not been the only pebble on Osler's beach of attractive young women. He interested himself in the loves of others. He offered *them* too the wedding services of 13 Norham Gardens and Christ Church Chapel. He had only one child, a son, and at the least he regarded the orphaned Marjorie as an unofficially adopted daughter. Did this epistolary humorous fantasizing over Marjorie merely represent the carry-over to a mature correspondent of his playful style with children? Tempting suppositions of deeper emotional involvement are just that. As does an interpretation of Osler's dreams, the full significance for him of his relationship with the younger Marjorie remains enigmatic.

Appointment of Frances Groen as Associate Director of Libraries

Mrs. Frances Groen has accepted the new post of Associate Director of Libraries at McGill University, effective November 1st, 1990. She will no longer be Life Sciences Area Librarian and, as such, an ex-officio member of the Board of Curators of the Osler Library. During her term of office as Life Sciences Area Librarian, she has taken an active interest in the affairs of the Osler Library and, indeed between the end of 1984, when Philip Teigen left us, and early 1986, when Faith Wallis was appointed History of Medicine Librarian, Mrs. Groen accepted at my request the post of Acting History of Medicine Librarian.

The following is an excerpt from the notice of her appointment as Associate Director of Libraries by Dr. Eric Ormsby, Director of Libraries, McGill University.

"Frances Groen is admirably qualified for this important new responsibility. As Area Librarian she has developed and refined an exemplary array of services to a disparate group of users; thanks to her, the Life Sciences Area has always been in the forefront of technological advances at McGill. Ms. Groen has also been unusually successful in developing support for the libraries in her charge. Moreover, through her work in the Medical Library Association and more recently, through her presidency of MLA, Frances Groen has achieved a high degree of recognition in North American academic libraries. Her experience, professionalism, knowledge and administrative ability, all make her exceptionally well suited for the Associate Director's position."

We will miss her on our Board of Curators but she has assured us that her interest in the Osler Library will continue unabated. We are grateful for her continuing interest in the Osler Library and we wish her success and satisfaction in her new post.

E. H. Bensley

Harold Nathan Segall (1897-1990)

With the death of Dr. Harold N. Segall at the age of ninety-two on August 17th, the Osler Library has lost one of its best friends. In spite of his advanced age, death was sudden; he was at a business luncheon when he died.

Harold Segall received his M.D., C.M. from McGill in 1920. At that time, apart from his familiarity with Osler's textbook of medicine, Osler was little more than a name to him. Then, in the year following his graduation, he came to know Dr. Maude Abbott. During this year, he was a Demonstrator in Pathology and an Assistant Curator of the McGill Medical Museum. Maude Abbott was a Lecturer in Pathology and the Curator of the Museum. No doubt Maude Abbott must have talked to him of her hero, William Osler. In any event, it is a matter of record that, at Christmas of 1920, Maude Abbott gave him a copy of Osler's *Aequanimatas with other Addresses*. After reading this, he became an Oslerian and he remained an Oslerian throughout his long life. (But, it should be added, not an indiscriminate one; he was never indiscriminate). After the Osler Library opened in 1929, he lost no time in seeking out Dr. Francis and ever since then, a period of more than sixty years, he has taken a keen interest in all that concerns the Osler Library. He has been the generous and discriminating benefactor of the Library, particularly as the donor of many valuable books. In recent years, he has deposited in the Osler Library all his personal and professional papers, including patient records, research materials, student notebooks, and miscellaneous correspondence. This extensive collection will be especially important to students of the history of cardiology; cardiology was Dr. Segall's chosen specialty. Finally, it should be mentioned that Dr. Segall has been an elected member of the Osler Library's Board of Curators for almost twenty years. Small wonder that this appreciation was introduced by the statement that with the death of Dr. Segall the Osler Library has lost one of its best friends. He will be sorely missed.

E.H. Bensley

Dr. Faith Wallis on Year-Long Research Leave

The History of Medicine Librarian, Dr. Faith Wallis, will be on leave from the Osler Library for the period September 1990 – September 1991. She has been awarded a Research Grant with Release Time Stipend from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada in order to pursue her research into the history of scientific chronology in the Middle Ages. This research will take her to Britain, where she will inspect manuscripts in London, Oxford and Cambridge, and to Paris, where she will work at the Institut de recherches et d'histoire des textes.

In her absence, the Library will be in the care of her colleague Eleanor MacLean, Biological Sciences Librarian and head of the Blacker-Wood Library of Biology at McGill University. Miss MacLean's home library has much in common with the Osler Library. One of its founders was a physician-historian, Dr. Casey Wood, whose passion for ornithology created an important collection on rare and unusual books and manuscripts on birds. Dr. Wood's other passions, ophthalmology and oriental medicine, are reflected in his numerous gifts to the Osler Library, including a group of interesting Arabic and Persian manuscript and lithograph books listed in the appendix of *Bibliotheca Osleriana*.

Miss MacLean's professional formation and achievements ideally suit her for this interim post. After undergraduate training in biology, she took a degree in Library Science, and worked in various science libraries before coming to Blacker-Wood in 1972. She is very active in professional organizations particularly the Special Libraries Association, whose Biological Sciences Division she chaired in 1988-1989. She has published a number of articles, largely about the unique library she directs. Miss MacLean has a special interest in the history of science; she has contributed prefaces to exhibition catalogues and monographs featuring the Blacker-Wood's historical treasures, and has mounted important historical exhibits for display both at McGill and abroad. We are delighted that she has consented to take on this temporary assignment. The Osler Library will benefit greatly from her high competence and her energetic leadership.

The Friends of the Osler Library: A Report and an Appeal

With each passing year, the Friends of the Osler Library contribute to an ever greater variety of projects and enterprises. During 1989-1990, donations from our Friends have helped us pay for Renaissance books and ultra-modern computers, for posters announcing visiting speakers and dressing for leather bindings, for microfilms, appraisals, and consultants.

The development of our collections is, of course, the Friends' highest priority. Last year about \$10,000 of the Friends' fund went towards purchasing both rare books and current works. The Friends play a particularly vital role in the acquisition of valuable historic works specifically chosen to complement the core collection of the *Bibliotheca Osleriana*. An excellent example of such a purchase is Vittorio Trincavelli's *Enchiridion medicum de cognoscendis curandisque tam externis quam internis humani corporis morbis*, printed in Basel in 1583. Trincavelli (1496-1568) practiced medicine in Venice, and simultaneously pursued a parallel career as an editor of Greek classical texts. He combined his two fields of interest to produce an eight-volume edition of the complete works of Galen between 1541 and 1545. Osler did not own this particular edition of Galen, but he did acquire Trincavelli's translations of Galen's *De naturalium facultatum substantia* and *An sanguis in arteriis natura contineatur* (*Bibl. Osl.* 389). The second of these two Galenic works bears witness to Trincavelli's special interest in the vascular system. Along with Vesalius and many others, he was involved in an acrimonious contemporary debate on the theoretical principles of venesection. The second edition of his own treatise on venesection (*Bibl. Osl.* 4121) apparently appeared in response to the criticism of his views by Johannes Baptista Susius (*Bibl. Osl.* 4056). Though Trincavelli was a relatively minor figure of 16th century medicine, Osler's modest collection of his works touches the most salient features of his career. Our new Trincavelli is, by contrast, a general medical text comprising 832 pages of diagnosis and treatment of everything from tuberculosis to head lice. The work is fairly rare, having been issued only in this edition, and only three copies are traceable through the *National Union Catalogue*.

At the other end of the publishing spectrum are two microfilm sets purchased by the Friends which enable students and scholars to consult unique manuscript and archival materials. Minute books, accounts and other documents from St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London provide rich resources for studying the development of this important institution between 1547 and 1801. The medieval manuscripts housed at the historical division of Yale University's Medical Library have also been purchased on microfilm, and will be the subject of a special article by myself in *Memini*, the journal of the Société des études médiévales du Québec.

McGill *Medical Luminaries*, the first volume of our new series *Osler Library Studies in the History of Medicine*, was designed and printed using funds provided by the Friends. In a sense, the Friends can regard *Luminaries* as an investment as well as a donation, for revenues from sales will be added to the capital of the Friends Endowment Fund. The *Osler Library Newsletter* continues to rely on the generosity of the Friends, as do our speakers' programme, conservation and preservation initiatives, and engagement of consultants for appraisals and cataloguing. This year, the Friends also helped us to acquire a new office computer. The old computer has been re-installed at the reference and circulation desk, enabling staff to work on various projects there during less busy times. This has increased our efficiency and productivity considerably.

With this issue of the *Newsletter*, we officially launch our appeal for donations for the 1990-1991 year. The support of the Friends is, more than ever, vital to our growth and the diversification of our programmes, and your confidence in the Library is profoundly appreciated.

Faith Wallis

N.B. Donations to the Friends of the Osler Library received since June 1990 will be recorded in the February 1991 *Newsletter*.

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

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