

OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

NO. 6 - FEBRUARY 1971

THE OSLER CATALOGUE

Bibliotheca Osleriana. A Catalogue of Books Illustrating the History of Medicine and Science. Collected, Arranged and Annotated by Sir William Osler, Bt., and bequeathed to McGill University. (Edited by W.W. Francis, R.H. Hill and Archibald Malloch). xxxv, 785 pp., large 4°, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1929, 63 s. (3 guineas).



ne rises from an evening over this extraordinary volume with an evocation of an almost forgotten past, repeating to oneself, it may be, the outmoded sentiment of some Victorian novelist - "Ah! those were spring days!" It is now something over a decade since Sir William Osler

passed away at the close of the World War, yet here we are once more, some of us, in close touch with the man, sensing his unique personality on every page, vividly, even, in those bracketed marginalia on his beloved books (signed "W.O.") which are the essence of fine bibliography. This catalogue of the great collection just dedicated at Montreal is a mammoth quarto, untempting to the sight, suitable for a monk's lectern at 45 degrees, hard on the *rectus abdominis* if read in bed, yet so alluring that the owner is apt to lose himself in it immediately, even into the small hours of the night. It would seem as if Osler were fortunate even in the time of his passing, for after 1918, he would have fallen, not necessarily upon evil days, to be weathered with the blithe serenity of his colleague Allbutt, who survived him five years, but upon a period in which the ethical, professional and personal ideals he lived for were broken down utterly, the *débâcle* of a great civilization, when even

"Strong Hades could not keep his own,
But all slid to confusion."

Life goes on as before, with "business as usual," young people are more cheerful than ever, but not even Osler could now say, with the poet he once attended: "Give me the pay I have served for: take all the rest." This volume evokes memories of his universal friendliness to each and all, how he would go out of his way to cheer a colleague with the gift of a book out of the blue or an encouraging acknowledgement of some trite reprint; his sympathy with young people; his charm as an essential Victorian gentleman of the younger school; the devotion of his pupils and friends; the tragedy which closed his life; his service to wounded soldiers in the war -

"Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers,
After such years of change and suffering."

The book is compact of the *nihil humani alienum* in Osler, that universal interest in all things human which Singer rightly styled "oecumenical." The three editors, Francis, Hill, Malloch, with Mackall as Osler's chosen sleuth-hound, have acquitted themselves nobly, making the dry bones live in a tome which will soon be prized like Haller's great *Bibliotheca*. As an introduction to medical literature far more instructive than those of Boerhaave and Young, it is a triumphant verification of Osler's expressed view: "There is no better float through posterity than to be the author of a good bibliography." It begins (following the editorial preface) with one of the most fascinating things he ever penned, an autobiographic sketch on "The Making of a Library." There follows the great *Bibliotheca Prima*, an almost complete list of basic texts and related items illustrating the history of medicine and general science, from Lucretius to Röntgen. Some 67 names are featured in large type as outstanding leaders of science, very much as in Choulant's *Handbuch* of 1841, and these Dr. Francis styles "Primarians". No exception could be taken to the Osler Primarians up to the second half of the 19th century; but if one misses Semmelweis, Charcot, Graefe, Ludwig, Kelvin, Maxwell and some other prime movers, the list is after all, Osler's own, representative of himself, and no more to be bickered over than an anthology of his (or another man's) favorite poems. The meaning becomes clearer in *Bibliotheca Secunda*, which includes names and texts of secondary importance. If one misses here the essential contributions of some of his old familiars - Villemin, Trousseau, Frerichs, Naunyn, Dejerine, Marie, Metchnikoff, *hoc genus omne* - it is at once apparent that, like Landor, he was always giving such items away to make room for others, to the value of a small fortune. Upon the advent of such newer men as Pavloff, Cajal, Aschoff, Emil Fischer, Loeb, Abderhalden, Schaudinn, Behring, Wassermann, Bordet, Carrel, Rubner, Gulstrand, the list obviously closes. Some items which deserve a place in this wonderful collection - e.g., Baillou, Werlhof, Cruveilhier, Magendie, Sir W. Bowman, the pediatric compend of the younger Heberden, Goodeve's tropical pediatrics, Peacock on malformations of the human heart or the fragmentary history of medicine by Meryon (father of the famous etcher) will doubtless be added, as opportunity offers, by the faithful, who could have been of more material help in the master's lifetime had they realized the immense scope of his endeavor. By way of contrast, the third section, *Bibliotheca Litteraria*, is amazingly complete. We look for unusual medical poets like Campion, Lodge, Beddoes, Saint-Marthe, Littré, and sure enough, Campion *et al.* are there and even Sainte Beuve's fine *causerie* on Littré, with Osler's notation of its memorable close: "*Bien qu'il n'ait pas prononcé le fameux Serment qui lie au sacerdoce médical, il le porte écrit dans son coeur.*" Sections five (*Bibliotheca Historica*) and six (*Bibliotheca Bibliographica*) are made up of items on the history of medicine and bibliographic catalogues. Section seven (*Incunabula*) includes 104 items, apart from those cited in *Bibliotheca Prima*; and Section eight 132 MSS.,

notably of Albertus Magnus (1437), Ferrari da Grado, Haly Abbas (Arabic), Johannes Jacobi, Lancisi, Nicolaus of Cusa, an indenture of Edward Osler as surgeon's apprentice (March 22, 1811), G.B. della Porta (autographic), Sir John Harington's translation of the Salernitan Regimen, Constantinus Africanus and 15 early diplomas of the Universities of Bologna, Cambridge, Leyden, Padua, Pavia, Pisa, Rome, Utrecht and Venice. The appendix "Osleriana" contains the Edgerton Y. Davis items and a list of such intriguing Osler MSS. as A Study of Dying, An Anniversary Address on Walt Whitman, Appeal to Hibernia Magna, Imaginary Letters from Fallopius & Co. on Howard Kelly's Operative Gynecology, A Lecture on Life in the Tropics, The Lessons of Greek Medicine, St. Thelema, The Nervousness of American Women, the Transatlantic Voice and so on. The volume terminates with a remarkable list of Sinhalese, Persian, Arabic, Hindustani and Sanskrit medical MSS. and books, presented by Dr. Casey A. Wood. Of the collections made by Osler himself, Harvey (165 items) and Sir Thomas Browne (162 items) are probably as complete as human endeavor can make them. The typography and proof reading are what might be expected from the Clarendon Press. Not only should Oslerians vie with Cushing and Mackall in add-

ing missing classical texts of the smaller sort to this great collection, where possible, but should a second enlarged and revised edition appear, as seems probable, it could be made infinitely more valuable and viable, if issued in smaller and handier volumes (we can almost see the book-lover reaching for one of them with affection). May the present edition be to the next one as the 1543 Vesalius to the 1552-5 Vesalius, a collector's specimen, sought after for its historic associations, but yielding to its successor in completeness, usefulness and availability as a source of ready reference. As it stands, this volume ought to be in the hands of every seasoned lover of medical books and of every student who wishes access to the best bibliographic introduction to medical literature since Haller and Boerhaave. Those who work for the larger and more distant end will do so in the spirit which moved Sir William to put his remaining energies into the task and Lady Osler to carry on in the face of doubled loss -

"Make me see aright
How each hath back what he once stayed to weep,-
Homer his sight, David his little lad."

F.H. Garrison

This review of the *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, by Fielding H. Garrison, is reprinted with the kind permission of the New York Academy of Medicine from its *Bulletin*, 2d ser., 5: 860-863, 1929. Readers are reminded that copies of the 1969 reprint of the *Bibliotheca*, priced at \$65.00 are still available from the McGill-Queen's University Press. Excerpts from reviews of this reprinted edition are printed below.

"Attitudes towards books have changed significantly since Osler's day, and someone now reading the *Bibliotheca* for the first time will be surprised to recognize how fully Osler accepted his books and their authors as part of the living human community in which he moved. The phrase '*comes viae vitaeque*,' which he applied on his deathbed to his favourite volume of Sir Thomas Browne, could in a sense have been applied to any book in his library. The friends and colleagues who completed the *Bibliotheca* after Osler's death experienced the remarkable sensation that they remained in contact with Osler through their work on his books. The generosity that made 13 Norham Gardens, Oxford, the 'Open Arms,' also made provision for a library in Montreal where his books continued to offer the welcome which he had offered during his lifetime. The *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, in recording the relation of Osler to his books, records also a particular phase in the history of books themselves."

A.E. Malloch,
English Department,
McGill University

Papers of the Bibliographic
Society of Canada/Cahiers de
la Société Bibliographique du Canada, 1969, Vol. VIII

"... If we can truly judge a man's character by the books on his shelves, we should know much of Osler from the *Bibliotheca Osleriana*; because he annotated many of the entries, we learn even more.

"... Osler's basic humanism and his fascination with people as individuals comes through repeatedly, as in his concluding comment on Gui Patin's letters (#5277) 'from which one learns to forgive the bitter hate and the obstructionist, and to love the man for his spirit, his books, and his friends.'

"Unlike Patin, there is little for which we must forgive Osler, and many reasons to love the man for his spirit, his friends, and - as this catalogue makes clear - his books."

Charles G. Roland, M.D.,
Mayo Clinic,
Rochester, Minn.

JAMA, June 22, 1970

"How fitting it is to say here 'What's past is prologue.' In this newly issued *BO* the entire purpose of the Osler Library's and the *BO*'s past are exquisitely evaluated and placed in perspective in a delightful six-page Prologue by Lloyd G. Stevenson whose past and present occupations have kept him in close touch with the McGill library. Dr. Stevenson's essay is the most cogent evaluation we have ever had - including Cushing's remarks - about Osler as a collector and appreciative reader. No better analysis of the value of the *BO* and its importance has appeared in print, and one can certainly agree that, in spite of faults about which there has always been too much carping, the purposes of the book are still bright and new and valid."

Bull. Med. Lib. Ass. 1970, 58(2)

Lee Ash,
New Haven, Conn.

EXHIBITS

The Practice of Pharmacy

In July and August 1970, an exhibit of ceramic ware from the 17th and 18th centuries, and contemporary English herbals and pharmacopoeias, was held. Prof. T.H. Clark of McGill's Department of Geological Sciences, generously lent 13 pieces from his personal collection of English and European ceramics.

Cholera in the Nineteenth Century

September through December saw the Library examining cholera through the use of 19th century books, maps, and broadsides, as well as 1970 clippings from newspapers on the current outbreaks of cholera. One broadside for Oxford's St. Giles Fair was a CAUTION AND REMONSTRANCE TO ALL DRUNKARDS AND REVELLERS AND TO THE THOUGHTLESS AND IMPRUDENT OF BOTH SEXES, 1832. Several exhibit cases were devoted to Canada, with early Montreal medical journals such as *Medical Chronicle* and *British American Journal* . . . of *Medical and Physical Sciences* featured.

Maude Abbott at McGill

An exhibit will be opened late in February honouring Dr. Abbott, co-ordinated with the joint meeting of the American Association of Pathologists and the International Academy of Pathologists in the first week of March. It will run until June 1971.

AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY

In February 1970 this group organized and has provided the following statement of its aims:

"The stature of William Osler as a great and wise physician increases with the years. The American Osler Society meets as a group of physicians and members of related professions, united by the common purpose of keeping alive the memory of William Osler and keeping ourselves vigilantly attentive to the lessons found in his life and teachings. It is proposed to hold meetings periodically to present and discuss papers on Osler's life and his influence upon the profession; to publish such essays as Proceedings of the Society; to keep the memory of Osler fresh by placing before the profession a continual reminder of his high principles of life and humanism in practice; and to teach young men and women entering the medical profession of Osler's continuing inspiration."

The Society is most interested in gathering information on Osler lectures, essays, professorships, and clubs honouring Sir William's memory. Readers who can provide this help are invited to contact the Secretary of the American Osler Society directly: John P. McGovern, M.D., McGovern Allergy Clinic, 6655 Travis Street, Houston, Texas 77025.

OSLER MUSEUM DEMOLISHED

"I am writing to inform you of the untimely demise and destruction of the Osler Museum or old Pathological Building at the Philadelphia General Hospital. Various futile efforts were made to preserve this building but were of no avail." Thus writes Dr. Lawrence C. McHenry, Jr. from the Stroke Research Centre at the Philadelphia General Hospital.

Built in the 1860's as a post-house, the small two-storey building was used by Sir William Osler, among others, as an autopsy room from 1884 to 1889. In 1931 it was superseded by new buildings and was designated as the "Osler Memorial Building" by the Medical Board of the Philadelphia General Hospital. It was restored in 1940 with funds from Wyeth, Inc. and support from an Osler Memorial Committee, and reopened with the autopsy room as it had been in Osler's time. Other rooms were devoted to the Hospital's archival records, Osleriana, and the older books (1752-1920) belonging to the Hospital. In 1950 it was refurbished again for the presentation of a painting by Dean Cornwell, "Osler at Old Blockley."

Efforts to preserve the building were unavailing, and in the autumn of 1970 it was torn down. Contents of the Museum, being furniture, instruments, books, manuscript records and pictures, were saved and are stored in various places awaiting the day when they may be incorporated into the future Philadelphia General Hospital.

OSLER SOCIETY BANQUET

Plans are now under way for the 50th anniversary banquet of the Osler Society which will be held in the Faculty Club on Thursday, April 1st. On this historic occasion the speaker is to be Dr. E.H. Bensley, reminiscing about "Dr. W.W. Francis — Patron of the Osler Society." Tickets, at \$12.50 for attending staff and \$6.00 for house staff and students, will be available from members of the Society and from the Library.

13 NORHAM GARDENS, OXFORD

At a recent meeting in Winnipeg of the Standing Committee of Medical School Libraries of the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges, it was announced that the Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, Dr. W.R.S. Doll, is forming a collection of books honouring Sir William Osler. This collection will grace the now-empty shelves at the former Oxford home of Sir William, from whence came the nucleus of today's Osler Library. Readers of this *Newsletter* may participate by offering *in writing* books about Osler, by Osler, or with Osler's signature, to the co-ordinator for North America, Dr. William C. Gibson, Department of the History of Medicine, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. When accepted, the books can then be sent *directly* to Dr. Doll at 13 Norham Gardens, Oxford, England. Offers from individuals and institutions are welcomed.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE AND THE OSLER LIBRARY

Some confusion may exist in the minds of some people, both within and outside the McGill community, concerning the relationship between the Osler Library and the Department of the History of Medicine. Such confusion would be understandable since the connections are close and subtle and, to an outsider, the functions of the various personnel are not always clearly distinguishable. This is further compounded by the physical proximity of the two. The Library and the Department share the two-storey "Osler wing" of the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building, the Library occupying the entire third floor, with stack space above. The Department offices are off the Wellcome Camera Mezzanine on the fourth floor and access to them is through the Library.

In 1966, with assistance from the Wellcome Trust, the Department of the History of Medicine was established and Dr. Donald Bates was appointed Associate Professor and Chairman. As Acting Osler Librarian he is, together with the Board of Curators, ultimately responsible for the basic policies of the Library, while Miss Ellen Wells, who succeeded Miss Cécile Desbarats as Associate Osler Librarian, is responsible for its day-to-day operations. The Library is part of the McGill libraries system, working closely with other libraries on campus, particularly the Medical Library, within that system. (Readers who are unfamiliar with the Library's general history might consult an article by Dr. Charles G. Roland entitled "The Osler Library," which appeared in the June 5, 1967 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (vol. 200, pp 865-870). Some recent developments in the Library were discussed in the *Newsletter* of June 1970.)

The Department, on the other hand, is a member of the Faculty of Medicine, participating in its teaching and research programmes. The Department's support has been greatly enhanced by the establishment in 1965 of a fully-endowed Chair, the Thomas F. Cotton Professorship in the History of Medicine. To date the emphasis has been on the teaching of medical history in the undergraduate medical curriculum. Since 1968 a 20-hour survey course in this subject has been a required part of the first-year medical curriculum; opportunities exist for 10-week electives in the second, third and fourth years; summer research projects are being provided. Individual lectures and seminars have also been given within the teaching programmes of other departments in the medical school and elsewhere in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Next fall, under the auspices of the Department of History, Dr. Bates will give a course entitled "Medicine and Society: the intellectual and social background to modern medicine." In time, academic programmes at the graduate level will be offered.

The establishment of the Department and the resulting growth of the Library have been reflected in an increase in the size of the Library staff. In its early days, Dr. Francis worked alone; today Miss Wells is assisted by five full-time and, at the moment, four part-time staff members. This past year has also seen an almost complete turnover in personnel and many of our readers may be surprised to find familiar names missing from the list which follows. In particular, long-time friends of the Library will note that Mrs. Betty Wainwright is no longer with us; she and her husband

have recently retired to Nova Scotia from where we have received glowing reports of their new life. Of the present staff, two are professional librarians, Miss Susan Gillespie and Miss Marilyn Fransiszyn, whose chief responsibility is cataloguing; for the next few months they have been joined in special projects by two library school students, Miss Carol Klassen and Miss Halina Szypulin. Visitors to the Library are usually assisted by Mr. George Ekins or Mrs. Susan Dinsley who share responsibility for public services. Card production is the responsibility of Mrs. Ruth Adler and part-time clerical help is provided by another student assistant, Miss Gilda Shemie. The newest staff member, Mrs. Zlata Blazina, handles the processing of the approximately 1000 new acquisitions per year. Although not officially a member of the Osler staff, Mrs. Harriette Siteman is very much a part of the Library, keeping it bright and gleaming. Last, but far from least, a special friend and unofficial staff member is our voluntary worker, Miss Marion Wright, who provides tender loving care (and leather dressing) to Osler's precious books.

The staff of the Department, on the other hand, has remained small. There are two faculty members: Dr. Bates, and Dr. E.H. Bensley, former Vice-Dean of the Medical Faculty, who is our resident expert on Canadian and local medical history. The third member of the Department is Miss Nancy Grant, secretary and research assistant.

Although the ties between the Library and the Department will likely always remain close and subtle, the distinctions are becoming increasingly apparent as each grows and develops within its own sphere of interest and along its own lines of responsibility. The day may come when physical separation of the two will correspond to their increasing functional separation. But one thing is certain: the growth of academic programmes and the development of research in the history of medicine are very much contingent upon the continued growth of the Osler Library.

SALE OF DUPLICATES

The last issue of the *Newsletter* included a list of duplicates offered for sale by the Library. We have been delighted with the response: a total of 97 items have been sold, adding approximately \$600 to the special Osler Library-Medical Library fund. To those who were unsuccessful in obtaining the books they wanted, our sincere apologies – and better luck next time!

Our readers may be interested to know that the auction sale of Osler Library duplicates by Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., New York has now been set for April 6th.

Editorial Committee for the Newsletter: *Ellen B. Wells*, Editor, *Nancy Grant*, Associate Editor, *Dr. E.H. Bensley*, Advisor, *Karl Holeczek*, Photography.

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