



that when Drummond sat in his class the student made any parade of his literary leanings. Not that Osler, just five years his senior, would have snubbed him but there are few creatures more diffident than an unpublished poet.

The edition of Osler's *Principles and Practice of Medicine* published by Young J. Pentland in Edinburgh and London in 1892 was given a three-page unsigned review in the *Dublin Journal of Medical Science*. This was, one the whole, favourable, recognizing the book to be one of the best works on medical practice in the English language. "On every page we find the author's personal experience and opinions, not dogmatically laid down, but clearly put forward in conjunction with other and opposing views." The reviewer complained that insufficient space was allotted to bronchitis and insular sclerosis. "If we have called attention to what seem to be defects in this work, we have done so in no hostile spirit."<sup>8</sup>

It was Osler's genial custom to present rare volumes to libraries where he thought they would be well suited; thus he presented a unique copy of a textbook by Rhazes to the Library of the British Museum, the present British Library. He did not forget Dublin, presenting Sir William Petty's account book for the Down Survey, nicely bound in pigskin, to Trinity College.<sup>9</sup>

Writing from 1, West Franklin Street, Baltimore, on 29 October 1904, he acknowledged a paper sent to him by Dr. John Knott of Dublin: "Your paper on the angina pectoris interested me very much, particularly what you say as to its rarity in Ireland. It seems a very common disease in this country. I have collected now another long series, and hope next year when I get more leisure in Oxford, where I go in May, to issue the second edition of my lectures on the subject."<sup>10</sup>

When Osler, by then Regius Professor of medicine at Oxford University, visited Dublin in 1906, he left a card for Knott at the Shelbourne Hotel: "So sorry to have missed you-only here for a few hours." Osler thanked Knott<sup>11</sup> in due course for an article on Bernard Connor (1660-1698), an Irishman who became doctor to the king of Poland and described a skeleton displaying the features of what is now called ankylosing spondylitis.

One of Osler's most attractive books is *An Alabama Student and Other Biographical Essays* (1908). His subjects include John Y. Bassett (of Huntsville, Alabama) whose post-graduate odyssey took in Dublin, and Alfred Stillé, who also studied there. This book, incidentally, is dedicated to William Henry Welch (discoverer of the gas gangrene bacillus), a descendant of Philip Welch who, at the age of eleven, was taken from Ireland by Cromwell's soldiers and sold as an indentured servant in Boston.

Osler proposed the toast at the graduates' dinner in the Mansion House, Dublin, during the bi-centenary celebration of the Trin-

ity College Medical School on July 4, 1912 and delivered his famous panegyric:

Graduates of this school have been much in my life. To usher me into this breathing world one of them came many weary miles through the backwoods of Canada. Across his tie, as he called it, John King, MA, TCD, birched into me small Latin and less Greek.

From the days of Columba, the Irish of all classes have had a passion to perigrinate, and at every step in my career I have met your fellow graduates in Toronto, in Montreal, in many country districts of Canada, in lonely villages of the Thames Valley and everywhere the same intelligent and highly trained men, ever working with the hippocratic spirit, *caute, caste et probe*, and ever leaving their patients if not in better health, at least in better spirits.<sup>12</sup>

Unwisely, for he cannot have appreciated the nuances of Ireland's opposition to conscription in 1918 – a proposed imposition that Roy Foster, a leading historian, called "the culmination of the wartime government's record of disastrous Irish decisions"<sup>13</sup> – Osler sent a letter to the *Times* entitled 'The Curse of Meroz' (a biblical reference, Judges, 5.23). The Roman Catholic hierarchy's decision to speak out led Osler to demand that America, too, should speak:

Let Cardinal Gibbons and the strong Irish Catholics in the United States and Canada convince their brethren at home that two things are vital to abjure publicly the dream of an Irish Republic, and to join heartily in the prosecution of the war. Then she may win for herself an enduring peace – the peace she can never have with a perennial home rule trouble in Ulster, a peace she will not get, much less deserve, with the curse of Meroz on the land.<sup>14</sup>

An unpublished "Appeal to Hibernia Magna" and the draft of an open letter to Cardinal Gibbons among Osler's papers. The latter reveals him as opposed to Ireland's political freedom.<sup>15</sup>

Notwithstanding, Osler's posthumous reputation stands as high in Ireland as anywhere. On the Friday following Sir William Osler's death the following resolution was passed at a meeting of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland:

The people of Ireland are specially indebted to him for the generous way in which he placed his splendid gifts at their disposal in the furtherance of all matters affecting the public health. By his colleagues in this College, of which he was an Honorary Fellow since 1905, he was particularly beloved and honoured and now is deeply mourned.<sup>16</sup>

Cushing's *Life* was given an essay-review by the *Irish Journal of Medical Science*, the writing of which was a labour of love for William Doolin, surgeon to St. Vincent's Hospital. He praised the neurosurgeon for presenting so brilliantly "a series of impressions of Osler's personality, with its all-embracing humanity, his kindness to his patients whom he treated, according to a student, 'with equal parts of hope and nuxvomica!'"<sup>17</sup>

The delighted author wrote to thank him:

Dear Mr. Doolin – That was very nice of you. Such a good review! – with real feeling. Just the sort of thing I most appreciate after the slam I got from the *Nation* on Aug. 13th and from the *Morning Post*.

It was courageous of you to read the volumes through but I see you have. Else you could not have given so briefly such a good idea of what I – at great length – was endeavouring to make live – viz Osler's spirit.<sup>18</sup>

The formation of the Osler Club of London in 1928 ensured Sir William Osler's beatification; canonisation followed the inauguration of an annual Osler oration. Elsewhere similar societies have been founded to commemorate Osler's name and foster his ideals. Formal recognition is lacking in Ireland but Osler, nevertheless, has disciples in the Emerald Isle and the present author knew two who had met him personally, the already mentioned William Doolin, FRCSI, and Charles Dickson, FRCPI, his successor in the editorial chair of the *Irish Journal of Medical Science*.

The former, a man very much in the Oslerian mould, welcomed a new edition of *Aequanimitas*: "It is one of the reviewer's happiest memories to have spent an hour in Osler's company at a moment when he [Doolin] was still vibrating under the influence of his first reading of *Aequanimitas*. The impression has lasted a lifetime!"<sup>18</sup> Charles Dickson, Chief Medical Officer to the Civil Service and Registrar of the RCPI, recalled in his senectitude meeting Osler in Belfast in the green days of youth:

There was something intangible about him which defied definition – something which would only be felt by personal contact which I was immediately conscious of when I was privileged to meet him on two successive days as a raw young house physician in 1909. One felt what a wonderful experience it must have been to have known him as a teacher. There was no trace of condescension, but a kind of effortless understanding which seemed to radiate from him.<sup>19</sup>

When the editor of the Dublin Magazine, Seumas O'Sullivan, received a review copy of Selected Writings of Sir William Osler (1951) he handed it to his brother-in-law, Dr. Bethel Solomons, a former Master of the Rotunda Hospital, who wrote an appreciative notice:

It is thrilling to read Osler's letters to his house physicians, for here is shown the wonderful, friendly scientific relationship. Breezily written, they are obviously intended to inspire the young doctor to improve his standards. He writes from Freiburg, Bonn and other medical centres, giving descriptions of lectures and hospitals.<sup>20</sup>

These obscure, literary-minded doctors responded predictably to the legendary Osler and helped to reinforce the legend. By a curious paradox, the only reference, perhaps, to Osler in Ireland's great literature is his unexpected inclusion by James Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* — "the ogy Osler will oxmaul us all"<sup>21</sup>—presumably a reference to the joke that misfired, the "Fixed Period" address, "oxmaul" being Joycean shorthand for the humane killer to which Osler, in a moment of puckish humour said that men of sixty should be gently exposed after a year of contemplation.

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In last October's Newsletter, we reported on some interesting summer visitors to the Library, including a scholar from South Africa who specializes in medieval alchemy, and who was thrilled to find a medieval manuscript of pseudo-Avicenna's *De anima* on our shelves (*Bibliotheca Osleriana* 480). The visitor was Dr. Italo Ronca of the University of Pretoria, and we will welcome him once again this summer as our Osler Library Research Fellow for 1993. The *De anima* is an anonymous 13th century Latin translation of a lost 11th century Arabic treatise on alchemy. It is composed in dialogue form, and comprises a prologue and ten books. The Osler Library manuscript is unique in that it contains the complete text: all the other surviving medieval manuscripts are only fragments. Moreover, it contains important chronological clues which permit the dating both of the original text, and of the Latin translation. The Library also possesses the first printed edition (*Basel 1572, Bibliotheca Osleriana* 481), which will assist Dr. Ronca in establishing the text of this important monument of medieval science.

The Student Fellow this year is Ms. Kae Bendixen, a student at the College of Medicine of the University of Iowa. Her project is an outgrowth of previous research conducted in collaboration with Dr. Susan Lawrence of the University of Ohio on the representation of male and female anatomy in textbooks used by American medical students between 1890 and 1989. Her article on this subject, co-authored with Dr. Lawrence, appeared in *Social Science and Medicine* 1992, 35, 925-934. The focus of her work at the Osler Library will be historic depictions of the childbearing pelvis, both textual and graphic. She plans to exploit anatomy and midwifery books, as well as materials in our manuscript collection, to explore how the pelvis was described, and to document the development of classifications by shape in the 19th century.

The Selection Committee for the Osler Library Fellowships are especially gratified by the high quality of applications for this year's competition. We interpret this as a sign that our program is well established, and that information about the Fellowships is reaching the audience for whom they are intended. Already, plans are afoot for the 1994 competition; readers desiring further information should contact the Library.

Upon the resignation of Dr. Faith Wallis last June, a search committee for a new History of Medicine Librarian, composed of representatives from the Library System, the Department of Social Studies of Medicine, and the Board of Curators of the Osler Library, was struck. The post was advertised, and a number of candidates, both from within and beyond the University, were interviewed. However, as this interview process was being conducted, McGill University suddenly found itself under severe financial constraints because of unprecedented and unpredicted cut-backs to our government grants. Hence the search committee decided, unanimously, to recommend an interim arrangement. The position of History of Medicine Librarian will be filled for a three-year term (September 1, 1993-August 31, 1996), and a new search committee will be struck in the 1995-1996 academic year to find a suitable candidate for a permanent appointment.

The committee is very pleased to announce that Mrs. June Schachter has come to our rescue and had accepted this interim appointment. Originally from England, with a B.A. and M.A. in Modern Languages from Oxford, and a Diploma in Librarianship from University College, London, Mrs. Schachter is a highly respected senior professional librarian, with over thirty years experience in McGill libraries. Amongst her assignments have been the directorship of important specialized collections such as the Blacker-Wood Library of biological sciences, and the library of the Institute on Islamic Studies. Currently, she is on sabbatical leave in Oxford, where she is studying new developments in books conservation and restoration -- a domain of expertise most appropriate to her new role. Readers of the Newsletter will be hearing more about June Schachter and her activities in future issues. In the meantime, we hope that the final months of her sabbatical are pleasant, and we look forward to welcoming her to the Osler Library in September.

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES OF MEDICINE

During the course of the 1992-93 academic year, the Department of Humanities and Social Studies of Medicine changed its name to Social Studies of Medicine. This is the second such change in the Department's history. Founded in 1966 as the Department of the History of Medicine, the name was first changed in 1981. (See Newsletter No. 36, Feb., 1981.)

Readers of the Newsletter will be glad to know that Medical History remains at the very core of the Department's activities. In fact, with two full-time (Don Bates and George Weisz) and one half-time (Faith Wallis) faculty members, it has been possible in recent years to develop an undergraduate honours program in the history of medicine, and graduate studies at the M.A. and Ph.D. levels, all of which are given in conjunction with the History Department in the Faculty of Arts. And, of course, we continue to offer a full survey in the history of medicine as a required course for all medical students, thus following a tradition at McGill that began before the turn of the century. The Department includes two other disciplines: medical anthropology (represented by faculty members Margaret Lock and Allan Young) and medical sociology (represented by Alberto Cambrosio).

The term "humanities" was introduced into the 1981 name because it was unclear at that time whether or not medical ethics would be included within its frame of reference. Subsequently, the McGill Center for Medicine, Ethics and Law has been created while our department has focussed exclusively on social studies. However, from the very beginning, the Department envisaged such studies as both humanistic and scientific. In fact, it was the belief that the social dimensions of medicine require their own perspective that prompted the preference for the phrase "social studies" over the more common "social sciences."

Itself a pioneer in this approach, the Department has also watched the growth over the past two decades of many somewhat analogous departments and centers that have as their mandate, the social study of science, and we see ourselves as the medical equivalent of those academic units. So, in keeping with this trend, and reflecting what has in fact been its own sense of mission since the beginning of the 1970s, the Department has decided to bring its name more in line with its particular perspective on the study of medicine. In keeping with that perspective, history, and the tradition which is particularly associated with the name of Sir William Osler, are still at the heart of those "social studies," while his Library remains (both literally and figuratively) the foundation of our work.

George Weisz, Chair  
Department of Social Studies of Medicine

## A WORD OF THANKS

The special appeal for funds to catalogue the Library's collection of 19th century French medical theses which was sent out with the February issue of the Newsletter has elicited a wonderful response from our readers. Over \$3,000 has been pledged for this project, and a number of our Friends have contacted us with useful suggestions for other funding sources. As word of our cataloguing initiative has made the rounds, other libraries have shown an interest in purchasing the tape of the cataloguing data. If these negotiations bear fruit, the costs to the Library will be considerably reduced. But it is to the generosity and imagination of our Friends that we owe our greatest debt, and it gives us pleasure to publicly acknowledge it here.

Faith Wallis, Osler Librarian  
David S. Crawford, Acting History of  
Medicine Librarian

### FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The appeal to the Friends for the 1992-93 academic year concluded at the end of May. The Library gratefully acknowledges the support it has received from Friends, both old and new, who have responded to the appeal for funds this year. Over the year, 338 Friends have given a total of approximately \$19,200. 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, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

The names of Friends whose contributions were received after January 31, 1993 are listed below.

The appeal for the 1993-94 academic year will be made in the October Newsletter.

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Legal Deposit 2/1993 ISSN 0085-4557