



OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

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The Osler Society of McGill University

The McGill Osler Society differs from many other clubs, past and present, for which William Osler was chosen as patron in that it is run entirely by and for medical students.

Unlike many such student-run societies, this one has endured the test of time if not the changes in focus and priorities which time brings. McGill's Oslerian heritage, the advent of the Osler Library in 1929, and the simultaneous appointment of W.W. Francis as first Osler Librarian are largely responsible for the activity and longevity of the Montreal club. This paper examines the motives behind the creation and perpetuation of McGill's Osler Society: the people who got things started, and those who did their best to prevent Osler's spirit and the Society which bears his name from dying out.

Why have so many people, young and old, medical and non-medical, at the turn of the century and in the present day, taken an active interest in Osler? Much has been written on that subject as well.^{1,2,3} A great deal comes down to Osler's *je ne sais quoi*. Sir Arthur MacNalty writes:

"Those who knew him felt the magic of his spell, but find it difficult to convey it in words for the information of posterity. Possibly the task is an impossible one, although ample evidence can be supplied of its effects in the appreciative accounts of Osler's influence on friends and students at Montreal, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Oxford."

Those who knew Osler were enchanted by "that basic principle which all recognize, but none can define"⁵ which they called the character or personality of the gentleman physician, teacher and friend they were proud to have known.

Lady Osler played no small role in building the faith of Osler worshippers: "Witty, wise and eminently prac-

tical, she was a devoted helpmeet to Osler, entertained his friends and students and made their homes at Baltimore and Oxford a Mecca of hospitality and goodwill."⁶ Thus Osler enthusiasts the world over were won over, and later passed on their sense of bedazzlement to future generations who were willing to share in the collective past of their respective mentors, thereby weaving a part of Osler into their own lives.

It is fitting that Osler's friends and followers honoured him by forming Osler clubs, since Osler himself was very active in a variety of societies; when he couldn't find the one he was looking for, he formed his own club. For example, since there was no society devoted to the history of medicine in turn of the century England, Osler founded the Section of Medical History and Literature of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1912.⁷ Perhaps the first club that Osler established was in the spring of 1877, when as a young professor of medicine at McGill, five years after his own graduation from the same institution, he established a medical undergraduates' society to provide students with the opportunity to learn to write papers and express their ideas clearly, as well as to improve their skills in "the difficult science of debate."⁸ Although the McGill Medical Society was run by students, as the first president, Osler never missed a meeting and contributed a literary flavour to the discussions.

While still in Montreal, Osler was also active in the newly resuscitated Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society as well as the Natural History Society. In Baltimore, Osler helped to establish the Historical Club at Johns Hopkins to familiarize students with the "great epochs" of medical history - an optional subject in the newly inaugurated medical school's busy curriculum. Papers presented by pre-clinical students at the Historical Club's monthly meetings were published in the Hospital Bulletin. Once a week, "over a little beer and baccy," Osler took the opportunity to informally lecture his clinical students on the

"masters of medicine." He quotes Fuller who said that "history maketh a young man to be old without either wrinkles or gray hairs."⁹

According to MacNalty, "Osler's crusade for the study of medical history extended all over North America and inspired the foundation of many medical historical societies and clubs."¹⁰ In 1920, William C. MacCarty, who had been involved in Osler's Johns Hopkins club; agreed to found and host the meetings of a Mayo Foundation "Chapter" if it were named The Osler Medical Historical

Anne Andermann, the author of the lead article in this issue of the Newsletter, never does anything by halves. On the contrary, she usually does them by doubles! She took two undergraduate degrees: one from McGill, and another from Oxford. She has won not one, but two Hannah studentships to pursue her interests in medical history. Now she is working towards two more degrees simultaneously! She has taken a leave of absence from her medical course at McGill to study the history of neurology at Oxford, this time as a Rhodes Scholar. Since she entered the Medical Faculty, Anne has taken an active role in the McGill Osler Society, and last year served as its President. Before leaving for England, she did some research into the Society's history, and added her personal reflections on its significance for medical students today.

Society.¹¹ Thus, approximately two dozen physicians and surgeons met frequently during the five year period after Osler's death to "perpetuate our master's ideals and inspire our contemporaries to study medical history." In time, the society has been replaced by other clubs devoted to the history of medicine which do not bear Osler's name.

Charles G. Roland's 1971 survey of over one hundred North American medical schools showed that five student Osler societies are now defunct - Baylor University, University of Texas, University of Alberta, Univer-

Manitoba - and there remain only three-university of Western Ontario, University of Vermont and McGill University.*

All early accounts of the McGill Osler Society rely upon the reminiscences of C.J. Tidmarsh, the first president and co-founder of the society.¹³ According to Tidmarsh, who at the time of Osler's death was a "lowly freshman" enrolled in medicine at McGill, the Society was born out of an interest in Osler's life and writings on the part of four first year medical students and a shortage of money for extra-curricular books. The three other classmates who converged with Tidmarsh that fateful day in the fall of 1920 on the corner of Prince Arthur and University Streets opposite the then "New" Strathcona Medical Building were Stewart Henry, Sandy McIntosh and Clyde Ramsay. Together, these ambitious young men decided to enlarge their informal group to hold regular meetings at which papers would be presented on non-clinical topics.

Clarence Johnson Tidmarsh was born in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in 1894. During his arts undergraduate days at McGill, he was active on student council and president of the fledgling *Daily*. Having returned safely from military service overseas, he completed an M.A., and entered medicine in 1920. During his first year, Tidmarsh was class president, with Clyde Ramsay serving alongside him on council as class secretary.¹⁴ Ramsay, four years Tidmarsh's junior, was a very athletic Westmount lad who had also served in the Great War and was also extremely active in student life. Ramsay's motto was "there is no time like the present."¹⁵ John Stewart Henry, another overachiever, was top in his class in 1920-21 and again in 1921-22.

His hobby was "winning prizes." Henry was from New Brunswick; he had also served in the war, and on student council as secretary the year before Ramsay¹⁶. Finally, to round off the quartet was Clarence Alexander, better known as "Sandy," MacIntosh. Born in St. John, New Brunswick, in 1899, Sandy was enrolled at McGill in a double course of arts and medicine¹⁷ Thus, having returned from the Great War armed with great ambitions and broad interests, these young men took Osler's teachings to heart, and wished to put them into practice.

Having convinced their anatomy

already very popular Dr. "Sammy" Whitnall,¹⁸ that the formation of their society was a good idea, the four Class of '24 students set out to put together a constitution with their teacher's generous assistance. The inaugural meeting of the proposed Osler Society was held on April 26th, 1921.¹⁹ Fourteen students, including the four founders, gathered together at the home of Professor Whinall, located at 323 Peel Street. The object of the Society set forth was "to perpetuate the memory and teachings of Sir William Osler by the reading of papers and discussion of topics reflecting his ideals of a liberal medical education."²⁰ After a discussion of the new constitution and by-laws, the election of officers was held. The votes were unanimous and the results were as follows:²¹

Honourary President...Professor Whitnall
President...C.J. Tidmarsh
Vice-President...J.S. Henry
Secretary-Treasurer...C.N. Ramsay
Honourary Member...Dr. Chipman
Honourary Member...Dr. Gordon

Professor Whitnall kindly offered to hold the first regular meeting of the Osler Society of McGill University at his home.

In preparation for the grand event, a short business meeting was held two weeks before in the common room of the new medical building. The enthusiasm of the young men can be seen in the manner that each matter of business recorded in the minutes was motioned and "Carried!"²² The publicity committee advertised the first meeting in the *McGill Daily* in an article headed: "SOCIETY FORMED BY MED. UNDERGRADS - To Discuss Works and Teachings of Sir Wm. Osler." The article explains that "a departure

from the more practical clinical side of medicine has been aimed at with a view rather to gain some insight into the subject from its artistic, historic and romantic aspects."²³ More specifically, each year, every member has the duty to prepare and read a paper on a chosen topic. Two papers are read at each meeting, and then filed with a view to possible publication. Enrollment was thus limited to 24 students. A prize was offered at the end of each year for the best paper read.

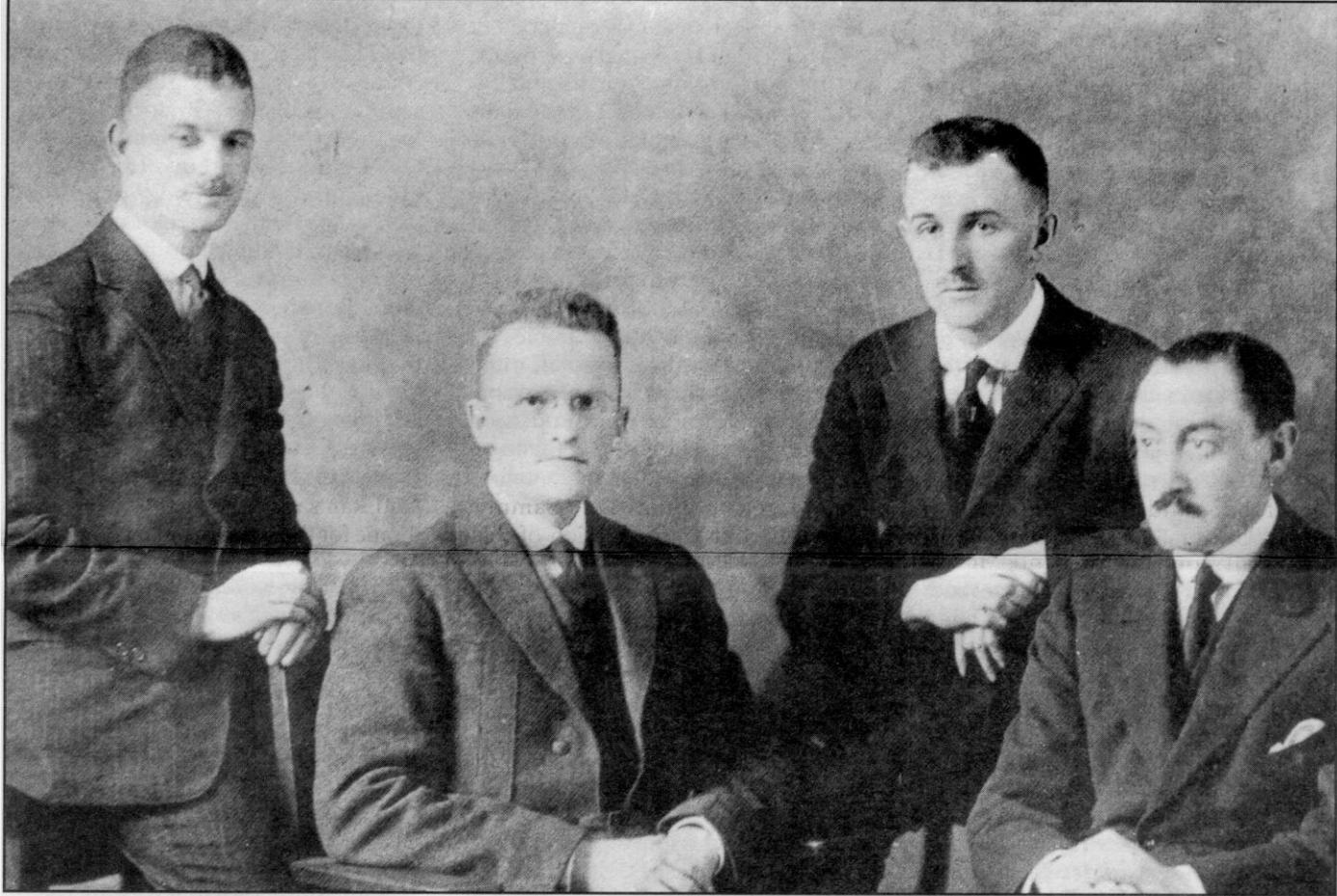
On October 19, 1921, Professor and Mrs. Whitnall, Messrs. Tidmarsh, Forster, Henry, Ross, Ward, Emmons, Geddes, McIntosh, Alward, Roache, and Ramsay congregated at Whitnall's home for the first official meeting of the Society. After the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved, and the new business was attended to, including the acceptance of several applications from prospective new members, two papers dealing with Sir William Osler were read: "The Medical Writings of Sir Wm. Osler" by A.K. Geddes and "The Literary Writings of Sir Wm. Osler" by H.V. Ward. The papers were followed by a discussion led by the Honourary President.

The first meeting was considered a great success, and future meetings followed a similar format:

"Monthly meetings continued to be held in Dr. Whitnall's home and a very agreeable custom developed. Dr. Whitnall would entertain two or three of the Faculty at dinner, we students would arrive at the coffee and liqueur stage, and the meeting commenced. This happy association continued through the first two years of the Society's existence and did much for its reputation and prestige. It may be noted in passing that at first we were known to our teachers as 'Whitnall's Society'.²⁴

In 1923, the venue of the meetings moved from Professor Whitnall's home to the Ritz Carlton Hotel, where Professor Horst Oertel, an ardent supporter of the Society,²⁵ resided. It was arranged that a remarkably low per capita fee of fifty cents would cover expenses for the use of the room as well as for sandwiches, ice cream, cakes and coffee.

The Society was referred to by Basil MacLean, the Society's second president, as "a little band of intrepid



First officers of The Osler Society of McGill University, from left to right: Secretary-Treasurer, C.N. Ramsay; President, C.J. Tidmarsh; Vice-President, J.S. Henry, Honorary-President, Professor S.E. Whitnall

explorers of medical history.²⁶ The group was certainly little, numbering no more than 24 at first, and even to this day, rarely more than 30 to 40 students participate.

At first, the Osler Society was suspected of being "a sort of pseudo-intellectual scorpion's club."²⁷ There was certainly a lot of bureaucracy concerning the election of new members to the club, each of whom had to be nominated by a current member and voted upon by the entire group. However, once the society established itself and students came to know the members better, some of the mystique was lifted.

The proceedings of the society continued much the same for several years. Papers were read on various periods and masters in medicine, and were sometimes even illustrated with lantern slides. Discussions followed. Refreshments were served. Humour was always appreciated. The Professors often brought relevant books for students to pore over. Guidance as to how to prepare papers

was provided. Subjects were chosen based on cultural and historical interest. Professor Vladimir Wehla, a visiting professor from Czechoslovakia, expressed his surprise to find that students were interested in the historical aspects of medicine, which was not the case where he came from.²⁸ A simple explanation is that the interests of these McGill students stemmed from their exposure to Osler's philosophy. However, there is more to it than that. By understanding who the members were, as well as what Osler represented to them, the purpose and activities of the Osler Society of McGill University can be better understood.

The most striking link between members of the Osler Society is a background in the Arts.²⁹ Many of these students, having completed an undergraduate degree prior to commencing medicine, were generally a few years older than the average student in their class. Some students had served in the war, others interrupted their studies on account of work or illness, and others still had embarked upon lengthy grad-

uate courses prior to enrolling in medicine. Members of the Osler Society came from locations as disparate as Vancouver, Ohio, South Africa, Tatamagouche (Nova Scotia), China and California. However, they were all very active in student life as members of student council, members of the Alpha Omega Alpha fraternity, players of hockey, football and rugby, and the like. These students were also particularly involved in the more artistic pursuits as members of the debating team, actors with the McGill Players, and editors of the *McGill Daily*, *O/d McGill* (the university yearbook) and the *McGill Medical Undergraduates Journal*. Thus, it was the not-so-young men from around the world involved in multiple activities around campus who flocked together twice or three times a term to join in the activities of this "artsy" medical society.

The key question remains: What motivated the members of the Osler Society to write essays, arrange meetings and make presentations amongst themselves? It could not be on account

of the sumptuous refreshments; although free food never fails to draw a crowd of students. However, in the case of this society, the appeal has more to do with the distinguished company than the growling student stomachs. In Robert Quinn's address to the Osler Society in 1937, he compares his fellow members to the young Freud who found his niche in the renowned physiology lab of Ernst Brucke, stressing that "we too deem it a privilege to be on terms of friendship with some of the great doctors and teachers of McGill."³⁰ These doctors and teachers were more than just friends (which in itself was a tremendous honour for the young students); they were incarnations of the humanistic/scientific spirit which Osler exemplified.

The band of honorary members and their guests who graced the Osler Society meetings stimulated the impressionable and ambitious medical students, and put them in touch with the great physicians and scientists of the past, that they too might develop their capacities to their fullest and be spurred forward to great achievements. In an article in the *McGill Medical Undergraduates Journal* on "The Making of Doctors of Medicine" J.E. Rawlinson wrote that

"It would be worth a great deal to be able to feel the stimulus that must have resulted from personal contacts with some of the great medical clinicians and scientists of the past. Few realize that it is possible, through the medium of books, to have an intimacy with them that was denied to all but a few during their lifetimes. Today it is possible at will to get to know an Osler, Lister, Mackenzie or Pasteur (all of whom were subjects of Society papers) as a personal friend. They can be followed through their development and as privileged observers we can watch their reactions to situations and difficulties often surprisingly similar to our own. With them at hand, one need never lack the help of great and inspiring teachers in overcoming hindrances and difficulties of the moment."³¹

Therefore, the members of the Osler Society were devoted not only to keeping the spirit of Osler alive, but to awakening in themselves the humanistic and

scientific spirit which Osler embodied. The faculty friends assisted by supporting the Society's activities and by providing links to the past in the form of anecdotes or insight. With this view in mind, each essay composed and presented before the Osler Society was an exercise in getting to know the great medical men and periods of the past, in preparation for the student's own contribution to the future of medicine. These essays were regularly published in the student medical journal, often serving as the author's first publication. With their names in print and with new-found friends on staff (even as lowly pre-clinical students!), members of the Osler Society were well poised to make their mark.

In the early years of the Osler Society, praise and support from both students and staff abounded. However, J. Wendell Macleod, the third President of the Society who was in the Chair during that "halcyon year" when W.W. Francis and the Osler Library came to town, recalls that during the intellectually restless and adventurous inter-war period the proceedings of the Society were carried out in the dry tradition of the old Victorians-solemn and grave in accordance with the noble topics and austere surroundings.³² Macleod claims that "in the later 1920's the Osler Society may be said to have reached a period of stability bordering on sterility; [Dr. Francis] added fertility...[with his] spicy anecdote and robust humour." Francis opened wide the doors of the Osler Library and encouraged the interest of the students.³³ His consultations³⁴ and friendly consideration provided a window on the past and broadened horizons for the future. For this, many are eternally grateful.

It is worth remarking that upon the 50th Anniversary of the McGill Osler Society, "the student members decided that the Osler Banquet Address should be devoted to recalling the memory of W.W. Francis,"³⁵ rather than that of Osler. These students never even knew Dr. Francis, who died ten years earlier, but his history of active participation in guiding the Osler Society had made him their "patron" in the true sense of the word. According to E.H. Bensley, who delivered the oration that year, the Osler Society began with an exuberant start, but over the years excitement waned until Francis arrived to enliven the proceedings, add rituals, regalia and most of all the omnipresent spirit of

Osler. It is written of Francis that he lived his life in the shadow of the great Osler "to create for others a living semblance of Sir William."³⁶ Francis lovingly tended the fertile soil of Osler's fame, sowing the seed of Oslerolatry in the young, uninitiated medical students, as well as nurturing and strengthening the deeper-rooted memories in those who knew Osler well. Bensley recalls that Francis' favourite quote was "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet that have believed" taken from the Gospel according to Saint John. The students of McGill's Osler Society who flocked around their very own "Saint" Francis to listen to his stories of Osler, were those that have not seen, and yet believe. The impact of this "gospel" is visible in the volume entitled *Tributes from his Friends on the Occasion of the 35th Anniversary of the Osler Society of McGill University*.³⁷ One of many examples is Harold Segall's testimonial that:

"What Dr. Francis has done for me, he has done also for countless others. Through his personal friendship with succeeding generations of medical students, especially those active in the Osler Society, he has spread the inspiring influence of his own profound scholarship and has kept alive the spirit of Osler, the learned man and the great teacher."³⁸

Many of these medical students later taught their own students of Osler's humanism and his belief in a liberal medical education which includes the practice of paying tribute to the "great" medical men of the past.

Decades pass, and the Osler Society rite is passed from generation to generation of medical students at McGill. Meetings continue to be held in the Osler Library about once a month, sometimes only twice a term. Papers continue to be presented on topics of historical interest, and occasionally guest speakers are invited to give talks. The annual Banquet, with all the Oslerian ritual and regalia added by W.W. Francis, is still the highlight of each year. Nonetheless, there have been changes.

In 1945, as William Feindel was handing over the Chair to Joseph Stratford, it was decided to allow female medical students into the society.³⁹ Unlike previous attempts,⁴⁰ the

vote to include women finally passed. The first paper presented by a female student took place the following year when Miss Honour Kidd addressed the group, and Sean Murphy presided.⁴¹

By the 1970's, fewer and fewer papers were being presented at Osler Society meetings. Easy and informal reading groups attended by many replaced the more time-consuming task of preparing lengthy papers normally relegated to a select few. Meetings also focused less on historical topics, and were geared more towards prevalent social and cultural issues. Rather than having student speakers preside at each meeting, more and more often distinguished guests from home or abroad took the stage. The enthusiasm for the Osler Society waxed and waned with each period of four to five years. Somehow the impetus of a small number managed to infect many for a time, and then the magic of Osler's spell which they stirred up died down again.

Once such revival occurred in the early eighties and was headed by Bernard Brais. The zealous Society president and his fellow members hoped that the 1982-83 year would be "a launching pad for a time of feverish activity."⁴² During that time, they attempted to reinstate the "traditional" format of Osler Society meetings with the reading of two papers written by Med II students, including Brais' "*Antiqua Institutio McGilligensis: A Short History of the Osler Society*," followed by cognac. In addition to returning to past traditions, these revivalists hoped to start their own with a "Medical Hero Week Trilogy" highlighting the lives of Norman Bethune, Wilder Penfield and William Osler. Dr. Joseph Lella, then Chairman of the Department of Humanities and Social Studies of Medicine at McGill, and Dr. Philip Teigen, the Osler Librarian, were active in promoting and encouraging the Society's events, as were Dr. E.H. Bensley, Dr. Don Bates, and Dr. William Feindel. The revitalization of the Osler Society carried on for several years, and at least until Brais graduated from medicine. In 1985, the members revised the constitution, which had been untouched for 40 years, to better reflect the nature of the club:

"The Osler Society was founded in 1921 to perpetuate the memory and teaching of Sir William Osler, the most illustri-

ous graduate and later professor of the Faculty of Medicine at McGill. Through the presentation of papers, organization of seminars and lectures the Society strives to uphold his ideals of a liberal medical education. Subjects of particular interest to the Society include the history of medicine, social issues in medicine, the literature and cultural anthropology of medicine, and medical ethics."⁴³

Over the past few decades, the Osler Society has broadened its tastes and become less formal.

Since 1977, minutes of the meetings have no longer been recorded in the large, green leather bound ledgers, the first donated by Professor Whitnall and the second by Dr. Tidmarsh. Recent Society presidents noted that "the activities of the society differ from year to year and reflect the interests of its members."⁴⁴ Wine tastings, movie nights, and skating parties at Beaver Lake atop Mount Royal are just as much a part of current Osler Society proceedings as are lectures by McGill physicians or visiting scholars on historical or cultural topics. Nonetheless, with the same air of *aequanimitas* that students have beheld for decades,⁴⁵ Osler still gazes down upon the freshman class from his place of honour in the main lecture hall of the now "Old" Strathcona Medical Building. Each year, many of these fresh faces still take an interest in joining the society which bears his name. These days, by the time McGill medical students graduate, few will know little more about Osler than that he was born at Bond Head, Ontario during the mid-19th century, that he was once a student and a professor at McGill, and that he then went on to become a famous figure world wide. The "well-known and well loved facts" alive and strong in the hearts of many fifty years ago⁴⁶ are now fading with the advent of each new medical class.

Still, 75 years after its inception, the Osler Society provides McGill medical students with an opportunity to broaden their horizons, to round out their narrow vision of the fast-changing medical world into which they are entering. Regardless of how the format and the focus of the Osler Society have changed, it still fills the need that was felt even three quarters of a century ago in that:

"After a student commences his medical course there is very little time or opportunity to do supplementary readings into the many other interesting branches of medicine which are not mentioned in the curriculum, but which are very necessary for a thorough understanding and appreciation of this great science."⁴⁷

Every year, at the Osler Banquet, students and Society supporters still sing "God save our Regius Prof... God save the mighty chief" - and with gusto! These verses, first sung at Osler's farewell dinner in 1905 at the Waldorf Astoria (humorously dubbed the Walled Off Castoria), were later incorporated into Society ritual by W.W. Francis, and are still alive in the voices of today's students almost 100 years later.

Just as Osler wished to honour as his father the man who teaches him the art, the extent of his students' devotion knew no bounds. Moreover, his students' students - those who have not seen and yet believe-proved to be equally if not even more devoted followers with the romantic zeal of youth to spur them on. One young member of the Osler Society read the following at a meeting during the 1927-28 academic year:

"There are those among you who today treasure yesterday's memory of this man, while most of us cling only to a dream. Perhaps it was that dream which drew certain men together but a few years ago, and founded a society 'to perpetuate the memory and teachings of Sir William Osler by the reading of papers and discussion of topics reflecting his ideals of a liberal medical education.' **And** now we dwell upon that thought, and are guided by the spirit which inspired those who grasped its meaning. Those of us here who have basked in his reflected glory often lose sight of the spirit of the great teacher who has given us so much. The routine reading of his *Principles*, the frequent usage of his name clinically, the association with his name in his society all contribute to making his name almost a fanciful myth. Yet perhaps his spirit of nobleness often becomes dimmed by this con-

stant reference to him. To appreciate him fully we must turn to other sources, and stand on the mountain of contemplation, gazing at a figure undimmed by the mists of constancy, and see a man shining forth in silence and tranquility, the master.”⁴⁸

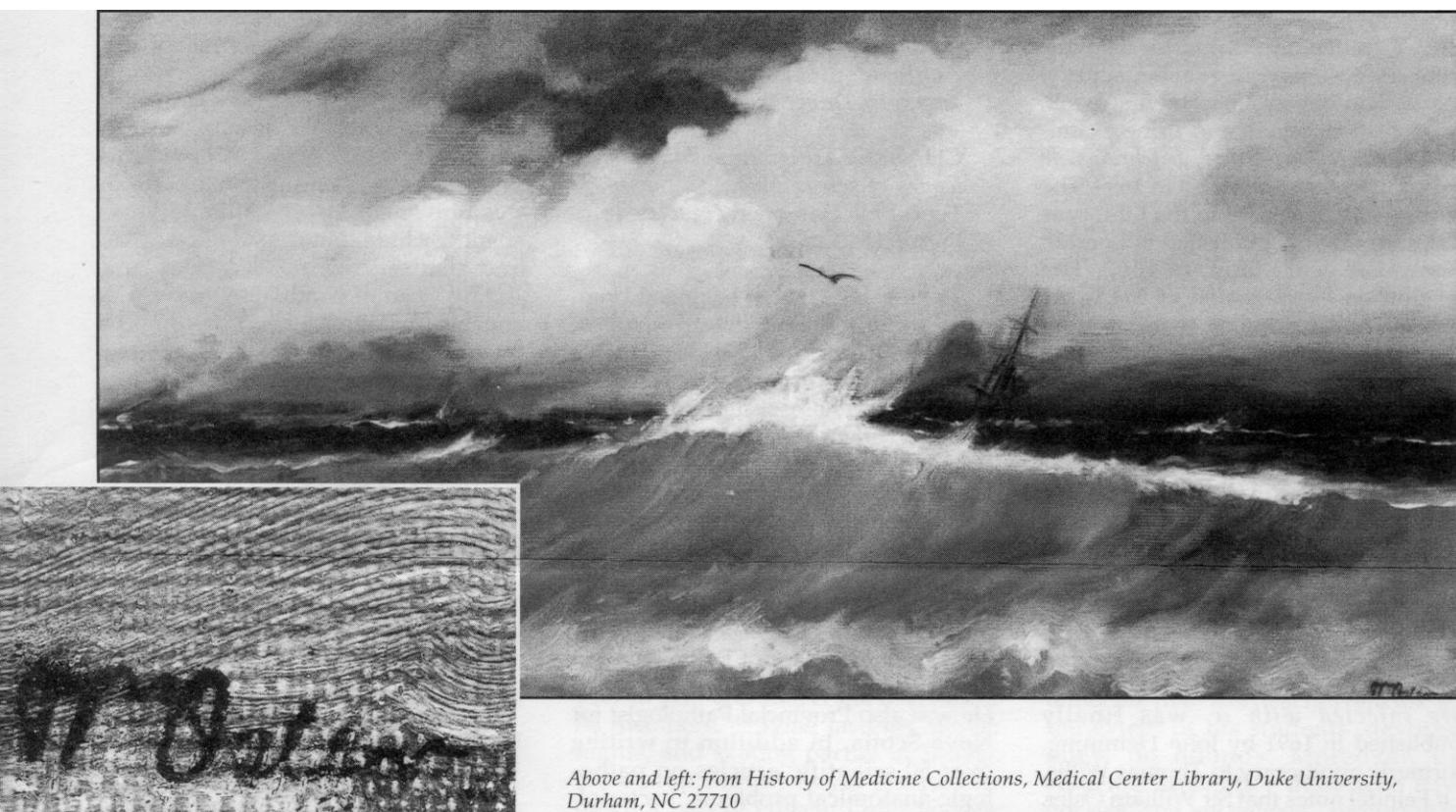
In this way, the Osler society was created. In this way, it marched on for many years. More and more, the excitement and enthusiasm in the Osler Society is increasingly reliant upon the individual members involved, and therefore the society will only survive so long as students learn to keep the flame of Osler alive amongst themselves.

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46. Freeman RG “Osler: Boyhood and Life in Montreal-Read Jan. 21,1936” *Osler Society Archives* 324/45,Osler Library, Montreal; 1.
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48. Michael P “Untitled-Read 1927-28 Osler Society Archives 324/2, Osler Library, Montreal; 2.



Above and left: from History of Medicine Collections, Medical Center Library, Duke University, Durham, NC 27710

William Osler, Artist?

Readers of the Newsletter who are familiar with Cushing's *Life of Sir William Osler* will recall that drawing was not Osler's forte. Indeed, his pride in his son Revere's talent for sketching and engraving was in direct proportion to his own alleged lack of competence in these arts (Life, v. 2, p. 99R). The seascape reproduced here will therefore cause some surprise, since the signature in the lower right hand corner is clearly that of "Wm Osler" (see enlargement). And the signature is without doubt authentic.

This painting was presented to the History of Medicine Collections at the Duke University Medical Center on March 27, 1997, by Dr. David E. Drake. An account of the ceremonies was published in the summer 1997 number of the Medical Center Library's newsletter, *Trent Associates Report*. Suzanne Porter, Curator of the History of Medicine Collections, kindly provided us with the two photographs reproduced here.

Dr. Drake was given the painting on the occasion of his retirement from private practice by a grandniece of Sir William, then a professor at Fayetteville State University (now the University of North Carolina at

Fayetteville). This lady had been Dr. Drake's patient for a number of years. According to Dr. Drake, she explained that her grand-uncle had said that he had painted the picture during his post-graduate studies in London, i.e. in 1872 or 1873.

The oil painting, in tones of green, blue, black, grey and white, depicts a ship on a stormy sea. The canvas is 24" by 12", and both canvas and stretcher have been determined to be of an age consistent with the time period in which the painting was alleged to have been done. The signature is executed in paint. But that is where the certainties stop! Efforts to establish the name and exact connection of the grandniece have not been successful. Dr. Drake recalls her name as Joan Corbett: he also recalls that she studied at McMaster and Toronto, did post-doctoral work in English literature at Harvard and Columbia, and joined the faculty at Fayetteville in 1964. Genealogical materials in the Osler Library have failed to turn up a Joan Corbett, though another Joan - and a grandniece of Osler's - Joan Mackenzie, did live at the Open Arms for a time during the First World War, and served as Osler's volunteer secretary. Since it is unlikely, in view of the dates, that Osler could have given the

painting directly to Joan Corbett, there must have been an intermediate owner. Given the unusual nature of this artifact - surely the only known oil-painting by the "graphically challenged" Osler we hope that Oslerians, and especially members of the Osler family, will be able to provide some clues.

Gifts to the Library

The most recent gift to the Osler Library consists of four books by Thomas Willis, Professor of Natural Philosophy at Oxford from 1660 to 1675. This magnificent gift was made by Dr. William Feindel, Professor of Neurosurgery and former Director of the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital, Curator of the Wilder Penfield Archive, and Honorary Osler Librarian (a title he accepted at the 1996 meeting of the Osler Library's Board of Curators). Dr. Feindel has written widely on the history of neurology and neurosurgery, focusing especially on the life and work of Thomas Willis.

Willis, generally called the founder of neurology, was also known for recognizing that diabetes is characterized by copious and sweetish urine, for describing myasthenia gravis, for

giving an accurate classification of the twelve cranial nerves and for his writings on epilepsy, headache, scurvy, mania and depression. His first book, on digestion, fevers and urine examination, *De fermentatione, de febribus, de urinis*, was first published in 1659. The edition just presented to the Library is the third edition, published in London just three years later, in 1662. The section on examination of the urine was evidently popular, to judge from the French edition (the second of the four gifts), *Dissertation sur les urines*. Tirée des ouvrages de Willis-très célèbre Medecin d'Angleterre. Nouvellement mise en François, par ***. Paris, Laurent D'Houry, 1683. In 1666 Willis set down a collection of notes on the prevention and cure of the plague. *A plain and easie method for preserving [by God's Blessing] those that are well from the infection of the Plague, or any contagious distemper, in city, camp, fleet, etc., and for curing such as are infected with it*, was finally published in 1691 by John Hemming, formerly apothecary to Thomas Willis. Dr. Feindel notes that Sir William Osler, in a sermon in 1916 commemorating Willis, commented on "the assaults of the apothecary" with "nauseous and horrid drugs".

The fourth book is a fine copy of the *Opera omnia* of Willis, bound in contemporary vellum, published in Geneva by S. de Tourne in 1676. No fewer than nine collected works of Willis were published in Lyons, Geneva, Amsterdam and Venice during the fifty years following his death. In this edition the printer, Samuel de Tourne, used the imprint Coloniae Allobrogum rather than Geneva in order to circumvent the ban imposed by Catholic France on books from Protestant Geneva.

In the original collection of books bequeathed to McGill by Sir William Osler there are six works by Willis. Dr. Feindel's generous gift adds breadth as well as lustre to the Library's holdings in this area.

Two more rare books were added to the Osler Library's collection in November 1996, thanks to the generosity of Dr. Robert Nicholls of Merrickville, Ontario, and of his daughter Dr. Eleanor Nicholls Curwood of Montreal. These are:

MALPIGHI, Marcello. *Opera omnia...tomis duobus comprehensa...* Londini, Prostant apud

Robertus Scott, 1686. This volume contains, i.e., Malpighi's *Anatome plantarum* with its appendix *De ovo incubato*.

CHABREY, Dominique. *Stirpium icones et sciagraphia...* Genevae, Typis Phil. Gamoneti & Jac. de la Pierre, 1666.

The Chabrey herbal belonged originally to Dr. Nicholls's father Albert George Nicholls (1870-1946). After graduating from McGill, Dr. A.G. Nicholls became Assistant Professor in the Department of Pathology, Assistant Pathologist at the Royal Victoria Hospital (1902), Assistant Professor of Pathology and Bacteriology, McGill University (1904), Pathologist and Assistant Physician, Montreal General Hospital (1907), and Lecturer in Medicine (1907). In 1914 he was appointed Professor of Pathology and Bacteriology at Dalhousie University. He was also Provincial Pathologist for Nova Scotia. In addition to writing over 50 scientific articles on pathologic-anatomical problems, bacteriology, clinical medicine, tuberculosis and the history of medicine, Dr. Nicholls collaborated with J.G. Adami on *Principles of Pathology*, Philadelphia, Lea, 1908-1909.

A.G. Nicholls was a keen book-collector and, according to his son Robert, particularly enjoyed finding herbals which Sir William Osler had been unable to add to his own collection. With its fine A.G. Nicholls bookplate, this profusely illustrated herbal finds an appropriate home, then, amongst Osler's books in Osler's Library.

The Malpighi item comes from the collection made by A.G. Nicholls's second son, Dr. John Van Vliet Nicholls (1909-1977), who took his medical degree at McGill in 1934, and then worked in Physiology under Boris Babkin. Having taught at McGill for about 25 years, he moved to London, Ontario, where he served on the medical board at the University Hospital and as Professor of Ophthalmology and Chairman of the Department at the University of Western Ontario.

In November 1996 the collections of Dr. A.G. Nicholls and Dr. J.V.V. Nicholls were sold at auction, by the John Nicholls estate, by Waddington's of Toronto. Dr. Robert Nicholls, who went to Toronto to attend the auction.

was able to secure these two important books, which he and his daughter then presented to the Osler Library

Dr. Robert Nicholls's own particular contributions to McGill have been in chemistry and in the history and philosophy of science. He retired from this university in 1973 after 37 years spent teaching and directing research, and also serving as Vice-Dean and Acting Dean of Graduate Studies. His energies have also been devoted to interests beyond the academic sphere. In 1932 he was one of the founders of the Canadian Railroad Historical Association, and he has been an active member ever since. He was enrolled as a member of the Order of Canada in 1983.

With their gift, Dr. Robert Nicholls and his daughter Eleanor have added to the Osler Library's collection a lasting reminder of the Nicholls family and of its many services to this university

During the year, Professor Emeritus Dr. T.L. Sourkes, author of *Nobel Prize Winners in Medicine and Physiology, 1901-1965*, London & N.Y., Abelard-Schuman, 1966, presented related files for the Library's archives. These were indexed and accessioned during the summer by a History student.

Dr. M.H. Friedman of Lansdowne, Pa. donated more Boris Babkin (1877-1950) material, now amalgamated with his previous donation.

Dr. Charles S. Bryan of the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, Columbia, S.C., presented an inscribed copy of his book *Osler: Inspirations from a Great Physician*, Oxford University Press, 1997. Dr. Bryan's object was, as he expresses it in the Preface, "to make his [Osler's] ideals and examples easily accessible to the present generation". Each chapter contains a central theme (time-management, career-planning, mentoring, positive thinking, education, caring, communicating, and the search for a balanced life). For Dr. Bryan, Osler and the authors he recommended for bedside reading still deliver a relevant message.

An unusual gift from Italy has delighted the staff. In summer 1996 Sonya d'Errico came to the Library to study Osler as a book-collector, and she has now given the Library a bound copy of her thesis *Sir William Osler bibliofilo*, (copiously illustrated, including colour photographs of the staff, the Library and the McIntyre Building),

which was presented to the Scuola Speciale per Archivisti e Bibliotecari, Università "La Sapienza" as part of the requirement for the librarian diploma course for the 1995/1996 session.

Dr. Akitomo Matsuki, Professor and Chairman of Anesthesiology at the University of Hirosaki School of Medicine, has presented a copy of his facsimile edition of John Snow's *On Chloroform and other Anaesthetics*, London, 1858.

Dr. Marcellino Amasuno presented a copy of Joseph G. Richardson's *Medicology, or Home Encyclopedia Of Health*, New York, Philadelphia, London, University Medical Society, 1904.

An exciting package recently received from Dr. William C. Gibson proved to contain not one but two new publications of his. *His Medical Comets: scholarly contributions by medical undergraduates*, just published by the U.B.C. Alumni Association of the University of British Columbia, provides hundreds of examples of important discoveries and clinical advances made over the centuries by youthful scientists in college or medical school. It is a welcome sequel to Dr. Gibson's earlier work on the same topic (Young *Endeavour*, Springfield, Ill., Charles C. Thomas, 1958). No *Time to Slow Down*, also published (in 1996) by the U.B.C. Alumni Association, is Dr. Gibson's autobiography, in 428 action-packed pages. Born in Ottawa in 1913, Dr. Gibson has (according to the introduction), been "in a rush ever since." The story moves first across the continent to Victoria, B.C., where he had his early education; then back east to McGill, where he entered the Faculty of Medicine in 1933, then the Neurological Institute a year later. Oxford was the next stop, and in 1938 he obtained his D. Phil. for his research on the microscopic structure of the synapses. After graduating from McGill in 1941 he served with the R.C.A.F. high altitude research group, then rejoined Wilder Penfield at the Neurological Institute. In 1949 he was appointed Director of Research for the mental hospitals of B.C., then Professor of Neurological Research at U.B.C. From 1959 until 1978 he was Professor of the History of Medicine and Science at U.B.C., and in 1984 he became Chancellor of the University of Victoria. These are just a few highlights of this fascinating, richly-detailed and some-

times hilarious account, peopled by an interesting cast of characters from Wilder Penfield to Lord Mountbatten of Burma. These are two finely-produced and very readable books, the one recounting the eventful career and the other reflecting the lightly-worn erudition of a distinguished Canadian historian of medicine.

On Osler Day 1997, Dr. Richard Golden, one of the Library's Curators and, with Dr. Charles G. Roland, editor of *Sir William Osler: an annotated bibliography with illustrations*, San Francisco, Norman Pub., 1988, presented the Library with a copy of his recently completed *Addenda* to that work, in no fewer than 67 pages.

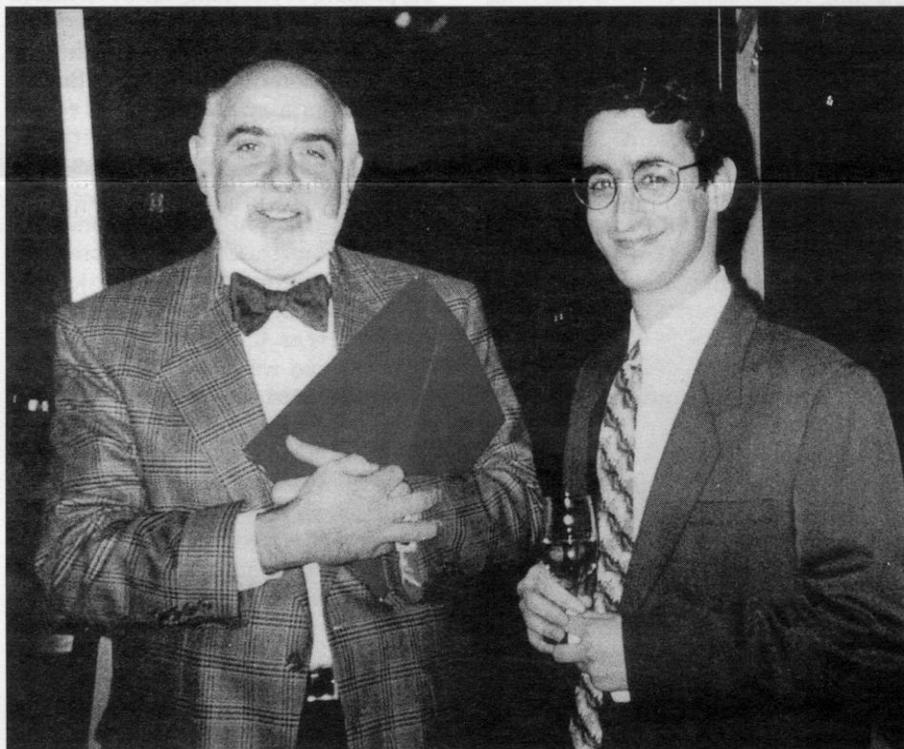


Dr. William Feindel Honoured by AMS/Hannah Institute

On Thursday 20th November, 1997, the Osler Library was the scene of a happy gathering in honour of Dr. William Feindel (see also the section on Gifts in this issue of the Newsletter) who had become the recipient of the 1997 John B. Neilson Award. This award, established in 1983 by the Board of Directors of AMS/Hannah Institute, recognizes important continuing contributions to the history of medicine by a Canadian physician whose primary responsibility has been in some other area of the profession. It was presented by Dr. Abbyann Lynch, President of Associated Medical Services, Inc. before a distinguished group of visitors who were welcomed to the Osler Library by the Dean of Medicine, Dr. Abraham Fuks.

After the speeches the guests had an opportunity to view an exhibition of books by and articles about Thomas Willis (see Gifts section) which Pamela Miller had organized in the Osler Room; and then made their way to the 6th floor of the building, where a reception sponsored by AMS/Hannah Institute awaited them.

Left: Dr. William Feindel with his award;
Below: Dean of Medicine Dr. Abraham Fuks, and Mark Rudolph, 1997-98 President of the Osler Society



In the June 1997 issue of the Newsletter we announced the award to the Osler Library of a 4 month internship, enabling us to hire a young archivist, Caroline Cholette, to create an inventory of the Cushing papers for Osler's Oxford period, 1905-1919. This project has now been completed.

Using the database Microsoft Access, selected information from each letter was entered onto the database to permit rapid searching of the roughly 3,600 letters assembled by Cushing for this period of Osler's life. In other words, if one wanted to find out about Osler's campaign against syphilis during the First World War in England, one would type in "syphilis" and the database would direct one to the letters where this topic was discussed.

One happy result of this project is that it is no longer necessary to handle each letter in a search for information. Basic content is entered into the database but if the researcher wishes to see the entire letter, that letter has a code and can be located immediately without digging through unwanted letters. The letters are very brittle, as they were meant by Cushing only to act as notes for his book. Original letters were sent to him, copied by his secretary and returned to the owner. Since many of the originals have since been lost, the Cushing Fonds at the Osler Library has become a principal source for research on Sir William Osler.

This project, made possible by an Archives/Museum Studies Medical History Internship grant generously provided by the AMS/Hannah Institute, has greatly enhanced our efforts to make the Cushing Papers more accessible. We plan to tackle the earlier years when time and funds permit.

1999 -The Osler Sesquicentennial

Plans are being made for the celebration, in 1999, of the 150th anniversary of William Osler's birth at Bond Head, Ontario, July 12, 1849. A Sesquicentennial Committee has been formed, and is chaired by former Dean of Medicine Dr. Richard Cruess. It has already been established that the American Osler Society will hold its annual meeting in Montreal in 1999. Our own Osler Day, at McGill, will probably be celebrated

at the end of October in that year. As plans are finalized, we shall keep our Friends informed.

As part of the federal government's youth employment strategy, the Department of Canadian Heritage is helping sponsors to create internships for young graduates who are unemployed or under-employed. The Osler Library has been awarded a Young Canada Works International Internship to enable us to hire a co-ordinating assistant for the Osler Sesquicentennial. Caroline Cholette (now well-versed in Osleriana after her work on the Cushing files as an archivist-intern in the summer) has accepted this interesting assignment.

Research Fellow 1997

The 1997 Research Fellow was Professor James Alsop of the Department of History, McMaster University, who spent the month of September here consulting the literature on health care available in a period (1660.1763) of rapid overseas expansion, when large numbers of people were exposed to a variety of health risks.

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we record the passing of two long-time Friends of the Osler Library.

Campbell Revere Osler, born June 21st, 1918, son of Featherstone Britton Osler, was a grandnephew of Sir William Osler. He served with the Royal Canadian Artillery 1939-1945 and when he retired from the service it was with the rank of Lt. Colonel. He read law with Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt, Toronto, 1945-1948, joining the firm as an Associate in 1948, (the year he was called to the Bar of Ontario), and was a partner of the firm from 1950-1984. Created a QC in 1961, he became a Doctor of Canon Law in 1980; and amongst his many other interests he was Chancellor Emeritus of the Diocese of the Arctic. Campbell Revere Osler passed away on April 21st, 1997. He had been a most kindly and generous supporter of the Osler Library, and was one in whom the collective memory of the Osler Family resided. We extend our sincere sympathy to his widow Mrs. Betty Osler, of Toronto.

Margaret Jean Stevenson, who died on August 16th, 1997, was the widow of Dr. Lloyd Stevenson, who came to McGill in 1954 as Associate Professor, Honorary Librarian of the Medical Library, and Assistant Librarian of the Osler Library. In 1956 he became Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, a post he held (along with that of Professor of the History of Medicine) until 1963 when he left for Yale. Dr. Stevenson himself died in 1988.

Friends of the Osler Library - Librarian's Report

The shelves of new additions in the Wellcome Camera again attest to the wide range of current monographs we are able to acquire because of our Friends' generosity, and also to the wealth of newly published research in the history of medicine. The geographical coverage is particularly extensive. *Health and disease in the Holy Land*, ed. by Manfred Waserman and Samuel S. Kottke, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen, 1996, is, by the way, a pleasant reminder of Dr. Kottke's 6 month visit in January-June 1997. *Colonialism, tropical disease and imperial medicine: Rockefeller philanthropy in Sri Lanka*, published in Lanham by Univ. Pr. of America in 1995, was written by Dr. Soma Hewa who is now a frequent reader here. China is represented by *Bubonic plague in nineteenth-century China*, by Carol Benedict, Stanford University Press, 1996, which documents the historical, geographical, epidemiological and social dimensions of plague in late Qing China. More and more new books on cholera are appearing, one of the latest being Naples in *the time of cholera, 1884.1911*, by Frank M. Snowden, Cambridge University Press, 1995. Charles Webster's commission to write an account of the British Health Service to 1979 is now completed with the appearance of the second volume of *The Health Services since the War*, London, The Stationery Office, 1996.

Work on the Americas includes two more volumes (v.10, Ecuador and Bolivia, and v.11, Peru) of the extensive set *Historia de los hospitales coloniales de Hispanoamérica*, by Fidel Aguirre Medrano, Miami, Editorial Interamérica, 1995-1996. *Medical ethnobiology of the Highland Maya of Chiapas, Mexico: the gastrointestinal diseases*, by Elois AM Berlin and Brent Berlin, Princeton University Press, 1996, and *Iroquois*

medical botany, by James W. Herrick, ed. by Dean R. Snow, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1995, are representative of a growing number of accounts of traditional medicine.

Moonlight, magnolias and madness: insanity in South Carolina from the Colonial period to the progressive era, by Peter McCandless, Chapel Hill, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1996; *Masters of Bedlam: the transformation of the mad-doctoring trade*, by Andrew Scull, Charlotte MacKenzie and Nicholas Hervey, Princeton University Press, 1996; and *Médecines de l'âme: essais d'histoire de la folie et des guérisons psychiques*, by Henri F. Ellenberger (20 articles written between 1954 and 1991), Paris, Fayard, 1995, all study different aspects of the care of the mentally ill.

New volumes of biographical material are always particularly welcome, and the latest addition in this area is J.M.H. Moll's *Presidents of the Royal Society of Medicine: illustrated profiles, 1805-1996: Dr. William Saunders to Sir Donald Harrison*, London & N.Y., RSM Press, 1996.

Canadian studies include the Catalogue *Léo-Pariseau: collection d'histoire des sciences et de la médecine*, Montreal, Université de Montréal, Service des bibliothèques, Service des collections spéciales, 1996. This long-wished for, two volume catalogue is a guide to the working library of Léo Pariseau, pioneer in radiology, creator of professional societies and journals, and World War 1 military doctor. The Preface describes this collection as a "pendant francophone" to the Osler collection at McGill. Other items of direct Canadian interest include *The discovery of insulin at the University of Toronto* (catalogue of an exhibition commemorating the 75th anniversary, at the University of Toronto, Sept.-Dec. 1996), University of Toronto Library, 1996, which has a historical essay by Michael Bliss; volume 3 of the *History of the Canadian Medical Association 1954-1994*, Ottawa, CMA, 1996; and *Labrador Odyssey: the journal and photographs of Eliot Curwen on the second voyage of Wilfred Grenfell, 1893*, ed. Ronald Rompkey, Montreal, McGill-Queen's Press, 1996.

Finally, the topic of cleanliness is studied in two new books at present on our new additions shelves. *Chasing dirt: the American pursuit of cleanliness*, by Suellen Hoy, Oxford University Press, 1995, is "the first general history

of cleanliness in the United States", and *Reinliche Leiber - schmutzige Geschäfte: Körperhygiene u. Reinlichkeitsvorstellungen in zwei Jahrhunderten*, ed. Regina Löneke & Ira Spieker, Göttingen, Wallstein, 1996, offers a European view of the subject.

Those are just a few of the new books recently added to the collection, but Friends' contributions ensure that there are always new items on the shelves. If you are interested in gaining electronic access to McGill University's online catalogue (which now contains most of the Osler Library's collection, apart from some rare books, reprints, and the archives and manuscripts), point your Web browser to <http://muse.mcgill.ca>

Rare and secondhand books: the second year of our \$20,000 SSHRC grant over a two-year period for the purchase of books on tuberculosis came to an end in August 1997. Along with those purchases, funding allocated from Friends' gifts enabled us to continue building up the collection on infectious diseases in general. Thus we have acquired, amongst others, *Observations on Cholera, its Symptoms, Mode of treatment and Prevention*, by R.P. Jones, Denbigh, T. Gee, 1834; *Cholera, as it has recently appeared in the towns of Newcastle and Gateshead*, by T.M. Greenhow, London, Highley, 1832; *Yellow Fever and its Prevention*, by R.W. Boyce, New York, Dutton, 1911; *Des maladies vénériennes et de leur traitement homéopathique*, by Léon Simon, Paris, Baillière, 1860; *Die Krankheiten der warmen Liinder*, by B. Scheube, Jena, G. Fischer, 1900; *Febrillogia ckyrurgicn*, by Francisco Suarez de Ribera, Madrid, Juan de Ariztia, 1720; and *Traité des affections de la peau symptomatiques de la syphilis*, by P. Bassereau, Paris, Baillière, 1852.

The acquisition of books new and old, and of archival papers, is vital to the life and usefulness of the Osler Library. Funds must also sometimes be expended on manpower to make these materials (particularly the archival materials, since for so long the Library was without a professional archivist) accessible, and on archival supplies for their safe housing. We owe thanks to the Library's Friends whose donations have allowed us to make progress in these areas too. In summer 1997 we were able to hire a student from the Department of History, who created finding aids for some archival papers and photographs, and placed them in

archival sound envelopes purchased for the purpose. And Pamela Miller continues to work for us on a part-time basis, applying her professional expertise as archivist to the challenge of making the Osler Library's rich archival collections more accessible.

As we launch our annual appeal to the Friends for funds it is possible that there may be a sense of déjà-vu about it all. This is due to the unhappy fact that the 1996-97 appeal, included as always in the October issue of the Newsletter, was not sent out until May 1997 (in a double issue which combined October 1996 with February 1997). We thank all those who patiently sent their contributions in spite of the delays, and apologise for apparently, although not really, making two appeals in less than 12 months.

Editorial Committee for the Newsletter: Faith Wallis, Editor; June Schachter, History of Medicine Librarian and Assistant Editor; Wayne LeBel, Assistant History of Medicine Librarian and Assistant Editor; Lily Szczygiel, Editorial Assistant.

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The appeal to the Friends for the 1996-97 academic year concluded on December 15, 1997. The Library gratefully acknowledges the support it has received from Friends, both old and new, who have responded to the appeal for funds. Over the year, 266 Friends have given a total of approximately \$31,288. Most of the contributions have come from Friends in Canada and the United States of America. However, very welcome contributions have also come from several other continents. The names of Friends whose contributions were received after June 30 are listed as follows:

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