



THE OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 99 · 2003

Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University, Montréal (Québec) Canada

IN THIS ISSUE

William Osler practiced and perfected his proverbial rapport with young children on the youngsters of the Francis family of Montreal. Their mother Marian was Osler's cousin, and the Francis house was very much his home-away-from-home when he was a youthful professor at McGill (1874-1884). One of those children, William Willoughby Francis, became the first Osler Librarian. The lead article in this number of the *Osler Library Newsletter* is by Susan Kelen, W.W. Francis' granddaughter, who is herself a McGill graduate (BSc 1976) and a clinical psychologist now living in Ottawa. It presents a collection of anecdotes about Osler set down many years ago by another member of the Francis brood, Marian – known as "May" or "Maysie". Maysie was a poet and author in her own right, and her lively style captures some of the energy and humour of her beloved "Uncle Bill".

Also in this issue, Pamela Miller reports in words and pictures on the formal re-opening of the Osler Library following the renovations generously funded by Dr. John McGovern. With characteristic modesty, Pamela passes over in silence her own heroic role in managing this ambitious project, stage by stage and day by day, from initial planning through to the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Those of us who observed at close range her unflagging attention to every detail of the renovation wish to remedy this omission with a very hearty vote of thanks! ❁



MAYSIE'S MEMORIES: SOME UNPUBLISHED RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR WILLIAM OSLER

The anecdotes recorded here come from three manuscripts, part of a series of five that were written in the 1920s by Marian Georgina Bath Francis Osborne (1871-1931), known as "May" and in the Francis family as "Aunt Maysie." The manuscripts were found among the personal papers of her brother, W.W. Francis (1877-1959), the first Osler Librarian at McGill University and my grandfather. They came into his possession after Aunt Maysie's husband's death in 1948.

"May" was the daughter of Marian Osler Bath Francis and George Grant Francis. She was one of the nine surviving children in the Francis household, and was six years older than her brother, W.W. Francis.

The manuscripts are written in longhand and in pencil, the longest being 24 pages in length. The first manuscript outlines the history of the family, beginning in the 1700s. The content of the next three manuscripts in this series appear to have been used as a preliminary draft of a more formal piece which was published in the Sir William Osler Memorial Number of the *Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums* in 1926. Marian Osborne's "Recollections" were published alongside 120 other personal and professional reminiscences.¹

Aunt Maysie was known to have artistic, dramatic and athletic talents. She had an excellent voice, painted, sang, acted in the theatre and as a young woman, was a fencing champion in Ontario. She lost an eye

in a serious automobile accident on July 12, 1921 and Lady Osler reports the incident in her letters.² Subsequently, Aunt Maysie, known for her flair and dramatic style, wore eye patches that matched the fabric of her outfits.

by Susan Kelen



Marian Osborne, c. 1893 (age 22).

In formal wear, on being presented to Queen Victoria. The court presentation would have taken place around the time of her first marriage.

*Would
Gwyn be
made to eat
the soup with
the inevitable
ending, . . . or
would uncle
Bill save the
situation?*



She published three books of poems, two children's books, and two plays one of which was produced in Ottawa and Montreal. She also wrote ballets and screenplays, and acted and painted. She was Vice-President of the Poetry Society for Canada and councillor for Canada for the Poetry Society of England.³

I have added titles to the anecdotes and some of the footnotes are from my grandfather. These are indicated as such.

Francis Family History

Born in Montreal, mother of Cornish descent, father of Welsh descent, Celtic. Parents came to Canada after marriage.

Father, George Grant Francis, son of Colonel Francis, mining engineer to the British Government who spoke seven languages.

Mother: Marian Osler whose father was an uncle of the late Sir William Osler and Sir Edmund Osler.

Grandfather (mother's side): Edward Osler was an eminent surgeon and literary man.

My father's uncle, John Deffet Francis was one of the founders (numbering sixteen) of the Savage Club in London, England. He was a painter.

Influence of WO

The greatest influence that ever came into my life was Sir William Osler who came to Montreal before my birth and was entrusted by his parents to my mother's care. (She had four boys and only one girl at the time.) He was only 23 years of age when he was lecturer at McGill and I was the especial object of his solicitude and care in my rearing.

We were companions and friends from the first twelve years of my life and until the day of his death. His life was an inspiration and his memory a benediction not only to me

but to everyone with whom he came in contact...

Osler Saves Gwyn from Soup

I must have been about six and my elder stepbrother seven, younger brother four, and then the two babies, the elder in a high chair, the younger in my mother's arms. Picture us all sitting around the luncheon table with a nice teaming bowl of soup for all the "big" children. Gwyn, who was always, as mother used to say, "rather touchy about his food", looked sulkily at the bowl in front of him.

"I don't want any soup today."

This was the signal for all the children to look appealingly at Uncle Bill.

"Don't be silly. Eat up your soup," said mother.

"I can't", this in a voice of the deepest gloom with a hint of tears to follow.

The situation was becoming strained.

Would Gwyn be made to eat the soup with the inevitable ending, a white set face and a sudden rush from the room with an attempt at the usual formula, "scuse me" or would Uncle Bill save the situation?

All eyes were fixed on him and no one looked at Gwyn, because children who are fond of one another never add misery to a heart that is vexed by staring at the face which would prefer to be hidden.

Suddenly, a look of absolute joy came over Uncle Bill. His black eyes flashed like diamonds and he laid both hands firmly on the table. Mother with an answering twinkle in her eyes said admonishingly,

"No Willie, no, it is so bad for them."

But whether it was bad or good after all, is a point on which children and their elders differ. The curtain was up, and the play had to proceed.

"Take the nasty soup away. I won't have any soup today," sung Uncle

Bill, "and Gwynnie was ill on Monday. Take the nasty soup away, I won't have any soup today and Gwynnie was **worse** on Tuesday."

So he went through each day of the week and each time he sang these words to us and to Gwyn, he sank a little lower in his chair until just before Gwyn's fatal death on Sunday only his head and hands appeared above the table. Then dissolution came at last with the total disappearance of Uncle Bill. In delighted ecstasy, we all peered underneath the tablecloth to see him lying curled up in a ball – quite dead. Mother trying not to laugh said, "Now children, your soup is getting cold. Hurry up and eat it." She did not appear to notice that Gwyn was putting his spoon eagerly into his bowl but putting it empty into his mouth.

Aunt Maysie's Premature Birth

But though this is my earliest recollection of "Uncle Bill", my acquaintanceship dates much further back than that, in fact, it dates back to the morning when my soul encased in an untimely and ill-begetting body found entrance to this vale of wrath and tears or place of joy and gladness whichever designation you may choose. It happened in this wise.

Mother, who was a very good woman and a very good churchwoman, I say the two designedly, let nothing prevent her attending the services of her church. On the day before I was born, and two months before my appearance was anticipated, she went to the service as usual. Unfortunately for her and for me, the verger had been having the pipes to the furnace cleaned and had forgotten to replace the cover of the register. My mother, thinking of spiritual things, stepped in and naturally received a great shock in being brought back to earth in this great fashion. She was taken out and taken home. When the nurse showed me to Uncle Bill, a miserable little bit of anatomy wrapped up in cod-liver oil and cotton wool, he

made a grimace, "It's a pity she lived. These sort are never any good."

I was to remind him of that many times in later years chiefly to have the pleasure of seeing his shamefaced expression and hear him say with a laugh, something to the effect that he had never had a reason to change his mind.

Francis Family Life

As a very little girl I can remember my punishment was to be placed in the corner on a high stool until I said I was sorry. I imagine this form of punishment is still in vogue among the powers that be over the nursery. There I would sit, with lowering brow, thinking darkly of the injustice of the world and very miserable because the light of my mother's love seemed to have gone out forever. There I would sit rubbing my two little strap shoes together trying to get them off. At last one came off and fell to the ground. At the sound, my brow lightened because I thought I saw a faint smile on my mother's face. Renewed effort and the other one fell. The tension relaxed.

"Now are you going to be a good little girl and say you are sorry?" said mother kindly.

A faint, "Yes."

"Well, say you are sorry and I will lift you down."

But that was much more difficult. That was such a long sentence and I was so far away and alone perched up on the top of that high mountain.

Enter the Fairy Prince.

"O, the darling."

"She has been a naughty girl, Willie," in warning tones from mother.

"Naughty girl? She couldn't be a naughty girl if she tried. Look at those two funny little shoes. They are not shoes at all. What are they?"

"Boats," with a smile through the tears. I knew it was going to be 'all's well with the world' now that he had come.

"Boats they are and boats they shall very well be, be, be," he sang

over again. I had forgotten what for but I was very glad to have her sheltering arms about me instead of being on the top of the mountain. But I knew that I should be rescued as soon as the Fairy Prince came.



Marian
Osborne,
c. 1881
(about age 10)

cheerfully and then with deep meaning putting them on the while, "and after that why we shall see, see, see. You are an extra special good girl aren't you?"

"Yes, yes."

"And you are most awfully, tremendously sorry and you'll never never do it again as long as you live, cross your heart?"

"No, yes, no," rather bewildered.

"Say 'no' three times."

"No three times."

"That's the girl," lifting me with a swing into the air that made me shiver with delight and plumping me down on mother's lap where we 'made friends' and I said I was sorry over and

I could cite many instances of his intervention to mitigate justly deserved punishments.

As when Grant and Gwyn and Brick, Percy being too old and brother Billie too young to be allowed to join in the wonderful game, took their new suits and taking them to the attic which was our play room, cut them up with the big cutting-out scissors. They were only playing at being tailors! But new suits were scarce in those days and the tragedy to the Olympians was not simulated.

Or when Billie⁴ in an abandonment of jealousy set fire to the curtains and then ran out and rang the fire alarm nearby almost before the fire had been discovered. The fire reels were puffing and panting and Billie was in the street gazing with joy and wonder at the brass helmets and the hose

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"No, yes, no," rather bewildered.
"Say 'no' three times."
"No three times."

... he worked and slaved hour after hour until he had overcome his lack of elocution, his Osler shyness and reserve and any other difficulties that stood in the way of his being a good lecturer.



being unwound and the wonderful horses – all in front of our house. He had done it, he alone – and the power and the majesty and the glory all was his. When the excitement was over and not much damage was done, Mother and Little Aunt Jennette and Uncle Bill were discussing how it had occurred. We children were innocent but we were all very glad it had been impressive. Billie who was a thoughtful fragile little fellow began to realize that the High Powers were not taking the scent that they should of the triumph.

"Well the other boys had the engines in front of their houses three times and we never had it once."

"Billie, you don't mean to say that you ..."

"I only used one match."

It was lucky that the Fairy Prince was there.

Aunt Maysie's Exploits

Being a girl wedged in the family as it were among a lot of brothers, I was allowed to join with them in their games and quite early was [initiated] into the masculine qualities of "play fair", "never surrender", "tell no tales," etc. We had the community spirit and we were brought up on mother's simple axiom, "Peck one, peck all," which after all was the thought in a nutshell. But this did not prevent the feminine cropping out and much to the disgust of my protectors. When we were all toiling up McGill College Hill with our sleighs, I would spy a student going up to his lecture. I would run after him breathlessly and say,

"Do you know Professor Osler?"

"Know him, of course I do."

"It's my Uncle Bill," then in a wheedling tone, "Would you pull my sleigh up the hill?"

This was a Machiavellian touch, because I knew the answer.

The giant would smile, "So he's your Uncle Bill, is he? Here get on, I'll pull you up."

Then we would talk happily about Uncle Bill until the top of the hill was reached. Having got to the top, I could afford to ignore such remarks from the Protectors as, "Dirty trick. He never would have pulled you up if you hadn't said that about Uncle Bill."

Another one of our joys was to build a snow house; it was called by us a fortress. Behind this barricade [we hid], which according to the fair play standard had to be put only just within throwing distance of the sidewalk. Here [with] an unholy joy, we used to watch the students going to and from their lectures and snowball them. They took it very good-naturedly, turning up their collars and running from the enemy. There were rules. "Never on the face and don't waste ammunition when out of range" and other strategic aphorisms that I forget. Unfortunately, the boys' range was too long for me, so in the heat of the moment I used to rush out and going very close deliver my snowball on my whim, flushed with pride.

One of the Protectors would say darkly, "You'll do that once too often." But I didn't care. Had not the student's expanse of dark blue cloth shown the imprint of a large and spotless snowball?

But 'once too often' came true.

One day an athlete swung round and caught me in a grip of steel and holding me high above the snow bank said in a deep and awful voice,

"That is where you are going."

I shrieked with terror, "You can't do that, you mustn't. Uncle Bill will never speak to you again." O, the blasphemy. "He'll kill you if you do." I had my doubts of this but fear makes liars of us all.

"There you are going and you will never come up."

This was serious. I lost my nerve. "Uncle Bill, Uncle Bill," I cried in anguish.

The athlete evidently thought he had punished me enough. He put me on my feet and said curiously, "Who is this Uncle Bill?"

I was saved. The magic cry had saved me from a frightful death. With great dignity and with one look of scorn, I said, "Professor Osler."

He laughed and went away whistling but I knew what I knew. I knew he was terrified. The Protectors had been really rather anxious at the turn of events but it didn't prevent them saying on my return,

"Hah, that'll teach you."

But it didn't.

Diction Lessons

When Uncle Bill first had to lecture it was a great trouble to him and many hours were spent on practice that he might be able to pitch his voice so that it could be heard. He also had difficulty in preparing his lectures. But it is typical of him that his master-word being work, he worked and slaved hour after hour until he had overcome his lack of elocution, his Osler shyness and reserve and any other difficulties that stood in the way of his being a good lecturer. I never knew a man who preached such high ideals, and I never heard a man who lived up to them himself more fully and completely. His ideals were based on truth, love, and beauty which is harmony and his ideals were the outcome of himself, his mind, his spirit.

Maysie's Engagement and Dr. Molson's Undoing

Every one loved him but none more than I, for was he not going to marry me? ⁵ Yes, we were engaged when I was five years old, and though he was a little older than I, still he had promised to wait for me, and I knew

he never broke a promise. We were going to have a farm in the summer with horses and cows and chickens and cats and dogs and birds and swings and a merry-go-round, and lots to eat, and no bread and butter or rice pudding and we could go in for a swim when we liked and stay in as long as we liked, and in the winter we would live in a log house because they were cozy, and toast marshmallows and pop popcorn and eat it after too, and skate and toboggan and snowshoe and tell fairy stories in the evening and not go to bed until it was ever so late. This was a never-ending topic of joy and went on with variations and with complete faith on my part for five years.

Then the serpent entered the Garden of Paradise in the shape of a handsome man, as I can see him now, standing on the sidewalk in front of the house on McGill College Avenue. He was dressed in the professional clothes of the Doctor, frock coat, and top hat. He had a young smiling face with a fresh complexion and quantities of short curly golden hair. I didn't know him but he made a sweeping bow to me – I was much impressed.

"I'm waiting for your Uncle Bill," he said.

"Did you take off your hat because you knew I belonged to him?"

"No, that was for you alone, my dear, but how do you mean you belong to him?"

"I'm going to marry him," I said confidently.

"Are you indeed, but don't you think you ought to have a fellow your own size? I mean isn't he a bit old?"

"O, no! He's going to wait for me – he's promised."

Dr. Molson, for it was he, was an incorrigible tease and practical joker:

"Wait for you, never. He'll never marry you," he laughed. "Don't you believe it, never, never."

He was not prepared for the onslaught that followed. I flew at him like a tiger cat, bit him, hit him, kicked him, knocked his hat off and then flew into the house to throw myself into the arms of the Fairy

And so he did. It was only a few days later when the Fairy Prince came in, without a whistle, on tiptoe with his finger to his lip. We children were round-eyed with wonder. He hadn't even jumped over the table.

Marian Osborne, before 1921 (about age 50.) This photograph is before her car accident where she lost an eye. Her headband is indicative of the 1920s and the mesh dress indicative of her flamboyant style, which surprised and shocked Grace Revere Osler.



Prince, in floods of tears, sobbing, "He says that you'll never marry me!"

"Who says so? Where is that villain of the deepest dye?"

I took him to the door and pointed at his betrayer.

He looked him up down and then solemnly took me up (in his arms) and introduced me.

"This is Miss May Francis, who is going to be my wife. This is Dr. Molson who was never known to tell the truth in his life."

Then in a change of tone, "You hardened old reprobate. What do you mean by making this lassie cry. I'll get even with you for this."

"He isn't going to," shrieked brother Brick hysterically.

"Ssh, Ssh, Ssh," he said and walked round the table three times, all five of us following with bated breath.

"Ssh, Ssh, Ssh. It's going to be a wonderful party, but we mustn't make a sound. It's going to be a wonderful secret, but we mustn't tell anybody."

"No, no," shaking our heads with fervour.

"Well, go up and tell mother, because we always tell mother all our secrets, and help her lay the table, and ask the Dawson children, and all the other children, because –"

Here he made us all join hands in a ring and dance round while he sang,

"This is Miss May Francis, who is going to be my wife. This is Dr. Molson who was never known to tell the truth in his life."

"But isn't that stealing?" he asked anxiously. "Not when it's Uncle Bill," said I proudly, "because he only does it for fun."



"We'll have lots of cakes and everything. And we'll steal them all from the goblin king. And we will dance and we will sing. And he will be cross as anything."

Wonderful thought, wonderful, wonderful Fairy Prince.

"Now Grant and May get on your coats. There is a cab at the door."

"A cab?"

Cabs were luxuries in those days.

Out we went and on the way he unfolded the plot, which in its audacity and wickedness fairly took away our breath. We were to drive to the house of Dr. Molson.

"I hate him," said I with flaming cheeks.

"Of course you do," said Uncle Bill calmly "but" – dramatic pause – "what do you think of his punishment? He is going to have a party and laid out on the pantry shelf are all his sweets and bread and butter."

"Please, not bread and butter!"

"No, Lassie, not bread and butter but cakes and sweets and ice cream."

"Ice cream, oh!"

"Two kinds!!"

Then my heart sank; "I don't want to go to his party, Uncle Bill."

The Fairy Prince threw himself back and with impish face, "But we are not going to his party. I am going to steal in, oh so quickly, so very quietly, and take all his cakes and sweets and ice cream, no bread and butter, and bring them all out to you in the cab and then we will have the most wonderful party that ever was seen."

"O, lovely, lovely," we said in an ecstasy of delight.

Grant looked dubious. "But isn't that stealing?" he asked anxiously.

"Not when it's Uncle Bill," said I proudly, "because he only does it for fun." Lightly up on the steps, along the passage, no one about, out he comes with an armful of cakes and plates and all. Back again, a pint of ice cream in each hand, sweets and more cakes the next journey.

"Whip up your, horses Jeremiah, home!" he shouted to the cabman.

What a wonderful Fairy Prince and what a wonderful party – and how much nicer than buying things in a shop. Anyone can have a party out of a shop, we children decided, with the scorn of those who know it would be denied them. And mother tried to keep us within decent bounds but Uncle Bill behaved so badly and told such funny stories and did such extraordinary things that we were all wild with delight.

"I shall never get these children to sleep tonight, and they will none of them be fit for school tomorrow," said mother.

"Hang onto my coat tails, children. All ready in line?"

Then at the top of his voice he sang these words in which we all joined with enthusiasm: "Take the nasty school away, we don't want any school today and I was on holidays on Monday."

So through the week till he sank exhausted in a chair and said dramatically, "And they never went back to school ever again in their lives."

"Three cheers, hurray, hurray, hip hip hurray," shouted all the children.

I have been to many parties, wonderful parties in their way, since then, but that stands out as the party *par excellence*.

Dr. Molson Goes to Court

Strange as it may seem from the forgoing chapter, there was a great friendship between Dr. Osler and Dr. Molson, which lasted until the end

of their days. They died within a week of one another.⁶

They were both practical jokers. Shortly after the incident of the party – by the way, the dishes and freezers were returned the next day with a polite note of thanks from the thief – Dr. Molson was walking down University Street in a brand new top hat.⁷ This was too much for Dr. Osler who was walking down the opposite side in an older one. Picking up a stone, he deftly threw it at the offending topper and knocked it off Dr. Molson's head to the ground and added insult to injury by going into peals of ribald laughter. Dr. Molson, who was very dapper and somewhat of a dandy, swore to be avenged and going to the Police Court took out a summons against Professor Osler for assault and damage.

In due course, the case was tried, and Dr. Osler had to appear and admit that there was some ground of truth in the accusation. After the usual formalities, he paid the fine. It was not a very heavy one as fines go, but he was not overburdened with worldly goods in those days. His hand was always in his pocket to help the needy, as indeed it was during the whole of his life.

What was the surprise of the court after the verdict to see the accused and accuser go off arm in arm rocking with laughter and congratulating each other on the success of their joke.⁸

Advice to an Adolescent Girl

I was a big tomboy of thirteen, large for my age and with a hidden but overmastering desire to go on stage. I had timidly broached the subject, but the powers that be decidedly and definitely swept the idea from the board. But still I brooded and thought and in an evil moment when school was particularly tiresome and I longed for fresh worlds to conquer, my eye lit on an advertisement, "Wanted: Chorus Girls for the _____ Co. No training necessary."

I applied, sang and was accepted.

At first I was filled with pride... But soon I began to have misgivings though obstinate in my resolve to run away and leave a note pinned to my pincushion. It seemed a romantic thing to do. Still, was it right?

My conscience began to worry me, and I thought I would go to Uncle Willie as I always did in 'trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any adversity.' When I look back on that interview I am amazed at his tact and knowledge of human nature, which of course he had to an extraordinary degree. He must have been shocked, to say the least, but no sign appeared on his face or in his manner.

"Splendid," he said, "Good, fine, and they accepted you."

"Yes," I said proudly, secretly much relieved by his attitude.

"I should think they wouldn't get girls like you every day – why there are few ladies in the chorus. Do you know any of the girls?"

"No, but I saw one or two and they looked nice."

"Of course they did, but it is mostly the servant class in the chorus. Poor things they have a hard time of it, but of course you have set your mind on it and I advise you to go. They have to sleep in garrets sometimes, but you are not afraid of mice –"

"I am."

"And get their food when they can and how they can, and the manager is very rude to them, sometimes they –"

"I didn't like the manager."

"Now, I should have thought a girl like you with your looks and your brains and a lady, would have liked to have taken a star part, like let me see, like, Mrs. Patrick Campbell."⁹

"Yes, I should like to be a star, but –"

"Why not. Why not, why not go to New York next winter, study for a year and come out as a star – I'll

arrange it. Yes, that is the thing to do."

All thoughts of the chorus were banished and I went back to school quite contented to dream dreams until another obsession came along.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell
(1865-1940)



I must be a nurse, yes, that was the only vocation, a nurse I must be, and at once.

Back again to the arbiter of my destiny.

"I want to go to New York and be a nurse, now."

"Why, a nurse, how strange, I was thinking the same thing. What a splendid nurse you would be, just cut out for it. The only thing is I wouldn't like you to go to any hospital but the Johns Hopkins and they don't take them at your age. But you shall come down to Baltimore with me next winter and attend all my clinics and study and [do] much better. You can live with me and Georgie¹⁰ Osler," and dancing around the room with me singing, "O that'll be joyful, joyful, joyful; O that'll be joyful, when we meet and part no more."

More school and more dreams for me.

But where else would you find a man who would deal with such tender consideration with the vanity and aspirations of youth.

*But where else
would you
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youth.*

Books Kept in Osler's Pockets

He not only loved books himself but he had the capacity to a marked degree of inspiring and bringing out the latent love of reading in others. He never seemed shy or self-conscious in his attitude towards the books he loved as so many men are who are deep readers. They take in, but they cannot give out. But Dr. Osler made his books as he did his work, his friends as he did his students. [They were] a part of himself – there was never any strain, and pedagogism, any pose or affectation in his attitude or manner because there were none of those things in the man. That made him beloved. ❀

References

1. Marian Osborne, Recollections of Sir William Osler, *Bull. Int. Assoc. Med. Mus. J. Tech. Meth.*, Sir William Osler Memorial Number, 1926, 9, pp.171-174.
2. See letters from Grace Revere Osler to Archibald Malloch in F.B. Wagner, *The Twilight Years of Lady Osler: Letters of a Doctor's Wife*. Canton, MA: Science History Publications 1985, pp. 41, 53.
3. See R. Golden, *Oslerian Verse: An Annotated Anthology*, Montreal: Osler Library, McGill University, 1992, p. 167.
4. "This is the first time I ever heard of this!!! It was [my brother] Jim who was the (much later) firebug. W.W.F. 1952"
5. In 1906, another 5-year-old girl was smitten by Osler. They decided to wait to marry when she was age 23. They conspired to kill his wife, Grace Revere Osler, with poison. Lady Osler took their potion and was revived with an antidote of coffee. Later Osler sent this girl a flintlock revolver with a note and it was to be used for the purpose of 'doing in' Lady Osler. Barbara (Babs) Chapin was the little girl. See Harvey Cushing, *The Life of Sir William Osler*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925, v. 2, pp. 51-52.
6. W.A. Molson did die the week after Osler. Molson spent his career as a family physician in Montreal, and he was recognized for providing medical services to the needy. His obituary is in the *Canadian Medical Assn. Journal*, 1920, 49, (10), p. 208.
7. See photograph of Osler with two colleagues, in beige top hats in Cushing, 1925, v. 1, p. 183.
8. See Cushing, p. 181. Osler submitted his E.Y. Davis article to Dr. W.A. Molson, the newly appointed co-editor of the *Canadian Medical and Surgical Journal* but withdrew it just before publication. Cushing writes "Molson had his revenge a year later", which I believe was Molson's submission of the E.Y. Davis article on vaginismus to Philadelphia's *Medical News* in 1884 which was published.
9. Mrs. Patrick Campbell (1865-1940): She was an actress with wit and beauty who starred in plays from the 1880s into the next century. Bernard Shaw wrote the part of Eliza Dolittle for her in his 1914 play *Pygmalion*.
10. This may be a typographical error. It should be Gracie Osler.

THE OSLER LIBRARY IS BACK IN OPERATION

by Pamela Miller, *History of Medicine Librarian*



Cutting the ribbon:
Dr. William Feindel, Pamela
Miller, Dean Abraham Fuks.

On Wednesday, November 27th the Osler Library reopened its doors with speeches, tours and a reception to celebrate the end of our renovations and the installation of climate control facilities for our priceless collections. Dean Abraham Fuks opened the ceremonies by thanking Dr. John McGovern for his generous help with this huge project. Our speakers included Ingrid Parent, Director General of Acquisitions and

Bibliographic Services at the National Library of Canada, replacing at the last minute Roch Carrier, Head of the National Library who had seriously injured his knee...skating!! Professor Faith Wallis spoke about Osler's Library and the Department of Social Studies of Medicine. As a special treat for our guests, on the afternoon of the opening, Professor Wallis selected our most spectacular works from our rare book collection for display for the duration of the



Public Services Assistant, Lily Szczygiel and Health Sciences Library Technician, Steve Burliuk get the reference desk up and running.

opening ceremony only. Dr. Feindel recalled the first opening of the Osler Library and surprised us with a splendid gift of two much coveted books by Thomas Willis, *De Anima Brutorum*...Oxford, 1672 and the

opened. The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections generously allowed us to house rare material identified by researchers for use during the time we were closed. Staff kept a few basic reference works

Once construction was under way, every Friday morning, a meeting took place with all the members of the renovation team. This included our excellent Project Manager, Lorraine Mercier; Francis Berthiaume,



(left) Antique table and chairs donated by Dr. William Feindel for the Post-1840 research room.

(right) The McGovern window [middle] inscribed, "John P. McGovern M.D., In recognition of his generosity to the Osler Library".

Amsterdam edition of *Cerebri Anatome*...of 1665. Pamela Miller briefly described the renovations and thanked those who had worked so hard to bring the work to completion.

The renovation project is a great success. It has accomplished the three tasks we set for ourselves: climate control, greater access to the circulating collection and more space for the collections and researchers overall. It has been an adventure for all of us. Before a mallet could be swung, the Library had to be emptied. To help diminish the number of books to be packed, sympathetic researchers were encouraged to borrow up to 60 books each and to keep them until we re-

in our temporary offices in an attempt to keep up with the reference questions which never take a holiday. Book purchasing kept on going too.

Altogether 15 students supervised by Carlos Rojas loaned to us by the Law Library, packed and unpacked 4,000 boxes of books. This included 22,000 rare books each of which was individually wrapped in tissue or enclosed in made-to-measure acid-free boxes before packing. Each truckload of rare books was followed by a security car as it made its way to secure off-site storage. We emptied our offices. Except for the Osler Room and the Wellcome Camera, the library was stripped down to the walls, floors and beams.

architect from the firm of Fournier, Gersovitz and Moss; André Lefrançois from Pierly Construction; the foreman, Fernand Pépin, along with heating, ventilation, electrical and fire-protection consultants when necessary. Frequently we picked our way over débris strewn floors for on-the-spot decisions over extraneous pipes and unexpected discoveries behind newly demolished walls. It was a relief to see new vents, electrical wiring and computer lines put into place. Once we arrived at the stage of locating computer outlets, choosing colours for the walls, linoleum and carpet (extraordinarily named "deep dish pizza") it seemed that we really would re-open in the near future.



Former Dean of Medicine Dr. Samuel Freedman signing the guest book watched by Nora Freedman, Dr. Sean Murphy, Dr. Roger Ghys and Martine Garnier-Ghys.

New compact shelving.

What will you see when you come to visit? In the Osler Room, you will see the glass doors of the bookcases back in place, as designed by Percy Nobbs, for the original library. Following the Library's move from

humidity at the appropriate level and to avoid sudden fluctuations. There is a new folio room with special shelving accessible through the Osler Room, and there is space on the folio shelves to add more books to the

What you will not see (or only if you look closely) is the new smoke detection and sprinkler system. Architect Julia Gersovitz made every effort to reconcile Percy Nobbs' original design with new requi-



Honorary Osler Librarian, Dr. William Feindel at the reference desk. Dr. Feindel has just been named to the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

Without your help, we would simply not have the climate-controlled, user- and staff-friendly environment in which we find ourselves today.



the Strathcona Building to the McIntyre Building, the doors were removed from the shelves and put into storage. The circulating collection was placed in the Osler Room and rare books shelved on the fourth floor in what would become the H. Rocke Robertson Room. Now, all the pre-1840 books are housed in the Osler Room and this room has its own special environmental control unit to keep the temperature and

collection. The environmental control unit was put to the test during our long stretch of unbelievable cold weather in January and February. It survived the ordeal beautifully. You will also see a new spotlight aimed at the Vernon plaque showing Sir William Osler in profile. Finally, there is a new green carpet on the floor and the ceiling has been painted. Visitors may enter the room by asking at the reference desk.

rements for safety and security. You will not see the motion detectors, the security camera, nor is the alarm system on the glass doors visible. Although you do not see it, most importantly you (and the books) can feel the humidity which hovers at around 40% in this room.

The Wellcome Camera boasts new carpet and paint, additional seating, two research rooms which cor-



Before. Old crowded folio shelves.



After. New folio shelves.



New compact shelving holding Osler's grant of arms and other Osler manuscripts.

respond to the pre-and post-1840 division in our rare books. Scholars consulting rare books and archives published in those periods leave their coats and brief cases in a cloakroom with lockers for bags and brief cases. Dr. Feindel donated the antique table and chairs found in the post-1840 research room. They go beautifully with the bookcase from the dining room of 13 Norham Gardens. The Don Bates Room, named after our late colleague who supervised the Osler Library while establishing the Department of Social Studies of Medicine, serves as a study room for members of the Department. On the mezzanine is the newly installed stained glass window commemorating Dr. John McGovern's generous gift which made it possible to undertake this project.

The mezzanine and fourth floor area (Francis Wing) now house our journals and circulating collection as well as the Francis Seminar Room and our offices. These spaces have been beautifully laid out with new flooring and lighting. The circulating collection and journals are now available to the public after 5 p.m. and on weekends. Already we see increased use of these books. Most importantly, we have several years of expansion space on the shelves.

The Rocke Robertson Room contains all the post-1840 publications, including journals and archives. This area is rarely visited by the public, unfortunately as this is where the brand new wine-coloured compact shelving is found, designed to give 50% more storage room in any given area. A rack of framed prints and photos plus our collection of artifacts are also found in this part of the Library. Ultraviolet filters on all our lights are another important conservation element which you do not see. Overall, there is much more space, additional light where it is needed and it is far easier to retrieve rare books and archives for our public in this new environment. Another happy result of our new facilities is that donors see us as a safe environment in which to place their precious books which they now know will be properly cared for as well as consulted. We have already

had several thrilling donations directly related to our ability to keep them in a suitable environment.

If you were not able to attend the opening ceremony, please do visit when you have time. Many tours have been given since that day and we are more than pleased to be able to show off our new facilities. Lastly, the Friends of the Osler Library are a continuing source of support. Without your help, we would simply not have the climate-controlled, user- and staff-friendly environment in which we find ourselves today. ❀

THE AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY MEETS IN EDINBURGH

An outstanding 33rd annual meeting of the American Osler Society, with the Osler Club of London, the Japan Osler Society, with the hospitality of the Scottish Medical History Society, was held in Edinburgh from the 21st

to the 24th of May, at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Members of all the societies presented a variety of stimulating papers. We were privileged to hear Sir Richard Doll deliver the John P. McGovern Award Lecture entitled "The Evolution of the Controlled Clinical Trial". During the meetings, the Library of the Royal College of Physicians organized a display of some of its breath-taking treasures. Banquets were held at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (followed by a tour of the college's anatomy museum). Pipes, poetry and haggis added even more local colour to the festivities. ❀

"DEAREST G... YOURS WO"

"Dearest G... Yours WO: William Osler's Letters from Egypt to Grace Revere Osler, edited by Lawrence D. Longo and former Osler Librarian, Philip M. Teigen has just been published, number 7 in our series of the Osler Library Studies in



Photo from:
*William Osler's
Letters from
Egypt to Grace
Revere Osler*

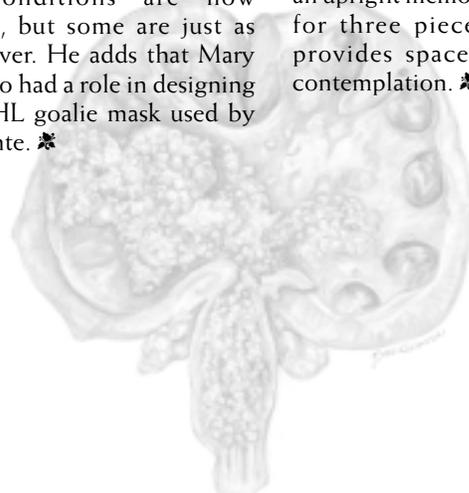


the History of Medicine. Heavily illustrated (many of the photographs were taken by Osler including the one reproduced here) and full of historical notes, these letters provide insight into Osler, his family, friends, colleagues and also into the lives of those privileged enough to travel in comfort in the British Empire of 1911. The original letters are here in the Osler Library and this publication not only makes them available to a large public, the editorial and historical work expands on the original letters and provides the reader with the context in which Osler lived, worked and sometimes even relaxed. Copies may be ordered from the Library or by our web page for \$25, or \$20 for Friends of the Osler Library. Canadian Friends should remit in Canadian currency (the price includes GST), and American and international Friends in U.S. currency. The price also includes postage. ❁

MEDICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustration reproduced here is one of many currently on display at the Osler Library and one of about 1,300 pencil sketches drawn by Mary Gzowski between 1938 and 1953. Dr. Richard Fraser of McGill's Department of Pathology is the curator of the exhibition. He points out that many of the conditions are now uncommon, but some are just as current as ever. He adds that Mary Gzowski also had a role in designing the first NHL goalie mask used by Jacques Plante. ❁

*On display
at the Osler
Library
sketches
drawn by
Mary
Gzowski
between 1938
and 1953*



LT. KIDNEY. PAPILLOMA OF PELVIS
& URETER. M.G.H.S.44-486 oct. 67

PATIENCE REWARDED



After a long wait, the Canadian Historic Sites and Monuments memorial plaque to the memory of Maude Abbott is finally in place in between the Stewart Biology Building and the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building. As can be seen from the photograph, more was involved than nailing a plaque to a wall. The installation, designed by Professor David Covo, Director of McGill's School of Architecture, was carved by the sculptor Claude Bernard, and is cut from Stanstead granite. Rather than an upright memorial, the design calls for three pieces of granite and provides space for meeting and contemplation. ❁

Erratum

In the lead article of the no. 98, 2002 Newsletter, the author's name was misspelled on pg. 1. In the caption it should read "by Dr. Bruce Fye" not "Frye". Our apologies go to Dr. Bruce Fye.

Editorial Committee for the Newsletter

Faith Wallis, Editor; Pamela Miller, History of Medicine Librarian and Assistant Editor; Lily Szczygiel, Editorial Assistant.

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Legal Deposit 1/2003
ISSN 0085-4557