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Chapter IV.

1870
Aet. 21.THE MCGILL MEDICAL STUDENT.

1870 - 1872

In an address delivered years later*, Osler ^{gave} gives the following

*"The Medical Clinic; a Retrospect and a forecast."
British Medical Journal, Jan. 3, 1914, i, 10-16.

thumb nail

has been

brief account of his period in the McGill Medical School:

When I began clinical work in 1870, the Montreal General Hospital was an old coccus- and rat-ridden building, but with two valuable assets for the student—much acute disease and a group of keen teachers. Pneumonia, phthisis, sepsis and dysentery were rife. The "services" were not separated, and a man for three months looked after medical and surgical patients, jumbled together in the same wards. The physic of the men who were really surgeons was better than the surgery of the men who were really physicians, which is the best that can be said of a very bad arrangement. The talk of the teachers was of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, or of Glasgow, of the Meath Hospital, of the Rotunda, and of Bart's, of Guy's, of St. Thomas's; and in a town four-fifths French the lights of Paris medicine burned brightly. Scottish and English methods prevailed, and we had to serve our time as dressers and clerks, and, indeed, in serious cases we very often at night took our share in the nursing. There were four first-rate teachers of medicine on the staff—Howard, Wright, MacCallum and Drake—three of whom had learned at first hand the great language of Graves and of Stokes. The bedside instruction was excellent and the clerking a serious business. I spent the greater part of the summer of 1871 at the hospital, and we had admirable out-patient clinics from Dr. Howard, and a small group worked in the wards under Dr. MacCallum. An excellent plan, copied from an old custom of the *Lancet*, was for the clinical clerk to report the cases of special interest under *Hospital Practice* in the local medical monthly. My first appearance in print is in the *Canadian Medical and Surgical Journal*, reporting cases from Dr. MacCallum's wards. Our teachers were men in whose busy lives in large general practice the hospital work was a pleasant and a profitable incident. A man like Palmer Howard got all that was possible out of the position, working hard at the hospital, studying the literature, writing excellent papers, and teaching with extraordinary care and accuracy; naturally such a man exercised a wide influence, lay and medical. I left the old General Hospital with a good deal of practical experience to my credit and with warm friends among the members of the staff.

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single space

1916

his spirit of indignation as it had not been stirred since his resentment of the injustice done to John S. Billings in 1885, in regard to his work for the International Congress.

To keep things going smoothly and to foster a good spirit in the corps, Osler had planned in his characteristic way to celebrate the second anniversary of the arrival in England of the members of the C.A.M.C. by giving a dinner to the Director-General, invitations to which he issued quite unaware that the affairs of the C.A.M.C. were at the time under investigation. The Canadian Minister of Militia had appointed a commission for this purpose, the composition of which was most unfortunate and it was not until August 20th that the matter was brought to Osler's attention; and on the basis purely of fair play he wrote a friendly letter not only to the head of the Commission but to the Minister himself, asking whether the Commission had been appointed without previous consultation with the Director-General as to its advisability or to its personnel. This request was looked upon as an impertinence, and, meanwhile,

To W. C. from the Rev. W. A. Johnson *to W.*

The Parsonage, Weston, Ont.
5th Oct. 1870.

My dear Osler,

I have been expecting to hear how you got down & what you found at Montreal & how you like it. I can not give you any account of Jim yet, but will when next I write. I have found a curious specimen in the Humber at the old place, the little bridge over the outlet of the Gren^r Pond. You may remember among my slides, one w^h seemed to be a kind of branch-trachea, this shape. [sketch]. It came up accidentally among other things some years ago, but the other day I found the whole insect a polyp, two & two on the under side of leaves, & they seem to be larvae. [sketch]. They have a case of minute granules? & connective tissue? & inside the case an insect with some hooklets on the body & two branching appendages at the head. [sketch]. I do not know what it is but will send one to Prof Hinks in a day or two & see if he can tell me. Can you find me a copy of Avrillon on the Blessed Sacrament in french? Probably M^r — the High Ch. Clergyman as he is called could tell you where to get one. I have it in English but want one to give away in french. Let me hear from you soon, & tell me all you

Send this up.

Oct. 1870

are seeing and doing. My very affectionate remembrances to your Sister
& with the same to yourself believe me ever yours most faithfully,

W. A. Johnson.

On his way to Montreal Osler must have stopped at Weston, possibly
among other things to help straighten out Jimmie Johnson's problems, and
hence Father Johnson sent him this letter post haste, though a scoop from
the Grenadier Pond was evidently the matter of chief concern at the moment
and "Jim" must wait. The Francis cousins, they of the Toronto Island,
had preceded him to Montreal, having taken residence on McGill College Ave-
nue, and ~~his favourite sister went on with him to visit them.~~ A letter
~~written by Featherstone Osler~~ ^{in a letter} ~~to his sister Elizabeth in Cornwall~~ ^{mentions that: "Willie"} ~~hints at~~
~~the reason underlying the transfer.~~

"Willie has gone to ~~Montreal~~ to McGill College where the hos-
pital advantages are greater than at Toronto. I wish to give
him every advantage in my power though it is very expensive.
Chattie went with him for a visit to Marian. She has not been
very well lately and we thought a change would do her good."

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^{in the 40's}
 Montreal ~~at this period~~ and for some years to come had unquestionably
 the best medical school in Canada and the opportunities ^{offered to students} there were pos-
 sibly rivaled by ^{the in} only one ^{city} school in the States. ^{— named in Philadelphia.} ~~— at the University of~~
~~Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.~~ The McGill school, ^{founded} ~~had been organized~~ by
 Scotchmen, ^{first} ~~and~~ from its inception ~~has~~ closely followed the educational
 methods in vogue at Edinburgh, where only the year before, a young man
 named Joseph Lister had been called from Glasgow to succeed Syme as Pro-
 fessor of Surgery. ^{The school moreover, it had just been moved from its old site on Cote Street to the University grounds where a new building whose foundation was laid in 1869 had just been completed.}
 The 'hospital advantages' spoken of were those at ^{by Lister's father}
 the Montreal General which, like the Edinburgh hospitals, was in ~~such~~ close
 affiliation with the school ^{that} ~~and~~ students were given a degree of freedom
 in the wards such as existed in no other large hospital on the continent.
 In the Upper Canada schools at Toronto and Kingston, on the other hand,
 traditions of the great London hospitals largely prevailed ~~— of Guy's,~~
~~St. Bartholemew's, St. Thomas's, St. George's~~ — traditions in themselves
 as worthy of emulation as those of Edinburgh, but one only needs to con-
 sult the Canadian medical journals of the late 60's and early 70's to

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1879

learn that in Toronto much dissatisfaction was rife and that the staff and the trustees of the Toronto General Hospital were at loggerheads over matters relating to medical instruction.* *A number of students.* The hospital was apparently

*In September of 1869 the Canadian Medical Association had met in Toronto, at which time Palmer Howard the Professor of Medicine at McGill and the President of the Association had read two notable reports on preliminary and on professional education in medicine. He had recommended not only a high standard for matriculation with examination requirements, but a four-years' professional course of nine instead of the usual six months and no diploma to be given before the age of twenty-one was attained. It is of interest that Dr. Davis of Chicago, the founder of the American Medical Association, was present at the meeting and urged the Canadians to adhere to these high standards as the example would be an influence in the establishment of something comparable to them in the States. There was much discussion over these matters which must have reached the ears of the students.

crippled for lack of funds, and it would appear that a number of the better students were becoming restive and contemplating a change of schools. Things were at such a pass that a public protest against a programme recommended by the trustees was issued by the teaching members of the staff, among whom was James Bovell. He, as has been seen, from personal experience was familiar with the customs not only of the London and Edinburgh hospitals but also of those in Dublin, and it may be im-

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1870.

West Indies

agined that, knowing full well the importance of ward work for students, he placed the future welfare of his favourite pupil above his own inclinations and advised him to make the transfer to McGill where clinical teaching was more highly developed. It would appear that the decision was made before it was known that Bovell, who had gone to the Barbadoes, was not to return. ~~He had~~ ^{very} ^{he had} Indeed at this time ^{been} active in formulating a new medical school to be associated with Trinity College University, an episode which lies beyond this story. Suffice it to say that his young friend goes to Montreal with a letter of introduction in his pocket to Palmer Howard - the man who was to become his "second father."

The McGill Medical School had just been moved from its old site on ~~Geté Street~~ to the University grounds where a new building, whose foundations were laid in 1869, had just been completed. Among the students living ^{and among those living} on Lower St. Urbain Street, ^{Students} ~~A~~ number of ~~whom~~ had already gravitated to Montreal from Toronto, ^{from St.} were ~~six~~ of Osler's particularly intimate friends,

Charlie Locke and Clarkson McConkey former schoolmates at Barrie, Thomas Johnson of Sarnia, Keefer later of the Indian Army, Arthur Browne of Montreal,

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1870

and Harry P. Wright of

Ottawa. They were a youthful group, most of them graduating before they were of sufficient age to receive their diplomas, but they were of robust

appearance and this "St. Urbain clique" came to be known as the "bearded

infants." ^{who became Osler's room-mate} Harry Wright in later years is said always to have laughed when

Osler's name was mentioned, ~~Certainly he never lost the ability to play,~~

~~as so many do with advancing years,~~ and one may imagine ~~at this time~~ that

his love of innocent fun and addiction to surprising pranks was still ram-

^{at this time} pant, though a ~~still~~ greater love of serious work was becoming deeply in-

grained. These two, Harry Wright and Osler, ^{were soon taken up by Palmer Howard and} ~~not only were room-mates~~

~~but soon~~ came to be constant visitors in Palmer ^{his} Howard's household where

Sunday dinner always found them. Though Howard unlike Bovell seems to

have been a solemn man, ^{as a boy seems to have been able} ~~the young~~ Osler even ~~at this time~~ ^{had the ability}

to form close ties with temperaments of any kind, and ere long a deep at-

tachment grew up between ^{the} teacher and ^{the} student, who later became the devoted

friend and mentor of ^{Howard's} ~~his teacher's~~ children, for ~~they~~ ^{his} on Howard's death

in 1889 ^{they} were practically entrusted to ^{Osler's} his care.

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1870

The only complete note-books of the Montreal student days still preserved are those containing Prof. Howard's lectures on the Practice of Medicine, which began October 5th of 1870 and continued to the end of the session of 1872. Howard must have been a systematic ^{teacher} lecturer of the old school, one who presented his topic under headings in a way very gratifying to students. "Zymotic diseases: due to a specific poison. They have been called miasmatic and the poison which produces them has been called morbid, etc.," and there is a good deal of stress laid on therapeutic measures ^{of which} ~~and it~~ all sounds rather old-fashioned, this presentation of medicine of fifty years ago. Throughout, the young student is evidently very attentive and has less temptation, or less opportunity perhaps, to scribble "James Bovell M D" on the ~~margins of the~~ pages, as he comes later to do while taking lecture notes on mental diseases, medical jurisprudence, materia medica and chemistry, fragments of which are in these ^{Student} same volumes.

Oct.
1870From W. A. Johnson to W.O.The Parsonage,
St. Phillip's, Weston.
20th Oct^r 1870.

My dear Osler,

Your kind letter was duly received & gave me much pleasure. I hope your connection with McGill will prove an advantage to you in many ways. The size of the city & its various opportunities may prove of service alone, & the change of ideas together with seeing & knowing different persons ought to be of great service too. Jimmy tried the examination & failed not in things of any importance, but as the examination was suited chiefly for aged school masters & such like, who might not have been within reach of early opportunities of knowledge & the rudiments of a liberal education, yet in this age of advancement ought not to be shut out, it was chiefly on english grammar from one book used in the common Schools of w^h Jimmy did not know anything. I was glad of it, as you may suppose, because as the matriculation examination was then carrying on at Trin. Coll. I went to the Provost who told me to send him & he went in then & there & is now at Trin. Coll. The Provost tells me they will certainly have a school of Medicine in connexion with the Coll. next year & for the present he may take lectures where he pleases & they shall count. ✓ I send you by this mail a little bottle w^h you will easily get at by picking away the corks with your pen knife at both ends & the bottle will drop out. It contains specimens of my stranger. Vaginicola? I suppose but can not find anything in my illustrations like it. The

two that are attached, one to a green leaf, the other a dry, were free when I put them into a saucer, ~~but soon attached themselves to something, the others are gone to a head, a case, . . . all in glycerine in wh they shew well.~~ They put up well in Balsam too, but are less distorted in Gly^e. No doubt some naturalist will tell you the name. If so let me know. The tentacles are very like those of Hydra. I believe the specimens to be larvae of some insect myself & if it could be watched we might soon know all about it. I say larvae because they are found oftentimes empty the case & the tentacles only. The body & hooklets gone. Thus I found tentacles only some years ago. I send you also a copy of Taylor's Holy Living. I have returned to my habit as a boy of reading a few lines of it every morning before going down stairs, & am not a little pleased to see in it the origin of all my religious that is practically religious ideals. It is a little book well worth using as a friend. Its teaching is higher than any High Churchism of the present day & in many things more plainly to the point. Liking Sir T. Browne as you do, you will be pleased with it & I trust & pray it may long be your friend & companion. We have not anything new doing here. The Dr [Bovell] is not likely to return this year. * * * Remember me very kindly to your Sister & tell me who you find in Montreal to talk to about religious or Church matters, as well as scientific. Let me hear from you frequently. It is a sort of duty I would like to exact from you, as well as a great pleasure to me. Hoping it will please God to bless you with health of mind & body & a strong zeal for others welfare believe me

am Very faithfully yours

W. A. Johnson.

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1870

The young Osler must have pondered considerably over ^{the} letter, for "James Bovell M.D. M.R.C.P." is scribbled meditatively in his hand on its margins. 'Father' Johnson, ~~was~~ apparently somewhat upset by his son's failure to meet the matriculation requirements, expresses relief at his entering Trinity and quickly passes on to more agreeable subjects - to things put up in balsam and glycerine, and to matters of religion. ~~Poor~~ ^{he} Johnson makes no mention of his own troubles, which must have been acute at this time for he was in open opposition to his bishop, and the boys' school of which he ^{had} ~~was~~ founder ~~had~~, by the machinations of his Head Master, ^{was} ~~been~~ taken away from him in this year of 1870 and moved to its present home at Port Hope. Johnson, alas, was, in matters of theology, a born controversialist, and it is not unlikely that this may have reacted upon his most famous pupil, for Osler was either born with ^{an aversion to,} or in some way acquired the happy gift of avoiding what his first preceptor seemed destined to fall into - controversies. And in the end, as Dr. Garrison says:

What made him, in a very real sense, the ideal physician, the essential humanist of modern medicine, was his wonderful genius for friendship toward all and sundry; and, consequent upon this trait, his large, cosmopolitan spirit, his power of composing disputes and differences, of making peace upon the high places, of bringing about 'Peace, Unity and Concord' among his professional colleagues.

"Wherever Osler went" says one of his best pupils, "the charm of his personality brought men together; for the good in all men he saw, and as friends of Osler, all men met in peace.*

*From the Foreword in "A Physician's Anthology of English and American Poetry." Oxford University Press, 1920. Selected and arranged by Casey A. Wood and Fielding H. Garrison.

But Johnson need have had little worry for his young friend's spiritual welfare at this time, nor lest Taylor's "Holy Living" be not read like the "Religio Medici" a few lines a day. For during his medical school period he was a regular attendant ^{at} for early service at the then little Chapel of St. John the Evangelist near where he lived, and it was not until several years later that he became a casual church-goer.* One

*His copy of "Hymns Ancient and Modern" is preserved. On the fly-leaf he has written, "W. Osler Easter 1871", and below there follows "Holy Trinity Toronto. St. John the Evangelist's Montreal. All Saints, Margaret Street London." All Saints is near Portland Place, and while in London in 1872-4 he and Arthur Browne lived not far away

Fall
1870

on Gower Street. The Rev. Arthur French has sent this note of Osler's relation to St. John's during his student days.

"This 'little church round the corner' was greatly valued by many of the Montreal medical men at that time; it was not only situated near the old Medical School on Côté Street, and very near the General Hospital, ~~at which all the clinics were held and the operations performed, to which the students had access,~~ but it was under the spiritual direction of the Reverend Edmund Wood, nephew of Aston Key the once well-known surgeon at Guy's. Mr. Wood had won the affectionate regard of the medical faculty generally, and of the students, by his faithful ministrations to the patients in the hospital, and to the poor which were ^{there} numerous in the district where the medical students ~~lived in the days of the old Côté Street medical building.~~

The periods of the lenten season and of the final medical examinations often synchronized, as it did in, I think, the year in which Sir William took his medical degree and greatly distinguished himself. The pressure on the time of this industrious and methodical student did not lessen his regular attendance at the daily service, even at the time, so important to him, of his examination.

Though with succeeding years there was modification of the manner of showing his appreciation and attachment to 'the practice of religion', there were throughout his life signs, though latent, that it always existed. He not only was a personal supporter for a considerable time of the work of St. John's, but to the last it was his custom, in many of his frequent visits to Montreal in later years, to call upon his friend and rector, Mr. Wood. His last visit to him was shortly before the latter's death, and was marked by Sir William's suggestion that he should collect a fund, among former colleagues, to erect a memorial in the church to Dr. Wright. The latter had been Professor of Materia Medica at McGill, in both the student and professional days of Sir William, and also subsequently being ordained, joined the staff of clergy of the church. Notwithstanding the death of Mr. Wood, the memorial was erected, and stands to-day not only as a mark of appreciation of one who was both his instructor and colleague, but also of the attachment Sir William had to his old friend and rector, Mr. Wood, and also to the church which as a student he was accustomed regularly to attend."

would be interested to know the tenor of his Christmas letter to Johnson

which brought forth this reply:

Dec.
1870To W. O. from the Rev. W. A. Johnson. 12/20The Parsonage, Weston, Ont.
25 Dec^r 1870.

My dear Osler,

Your very affectionate & thoughtful gift & letter are both at hand. The Photo. is very good, & I am delighted to have it. Montreal has surely agreed with you. I could not ask a greater treat than such a work as 'Préparation for Death' by Alfonso, Bp. of Agatha. The subject is one of all others that I like best; really believing as I do that, "better is the day of a man's death, than the day of his birth," & it is divided into short meditations just suited to my time early in the morning, when I can generally make 1/2 of an hour before I go down to Chapel. Talking of the Chapel almost everyone feels it is a success. One thing seems pretty clear, that almost any thing would be admitted now in the way of adornment. The cross stands out or peeps through at every arch & every window & we had two vases of flowers on the altar to-night & up at the Church the girls have made crosses between each window & even unhappy Couron begins to fancy he can permit them & still worship.* These little things are an advance to a certain extent, but still it is humiliating to see how little we accomplish. Surely one might expect that at this season of Advent a few would try to examine their ways & seek counsel & advice at the mouth of God's ambassadors. Among the papists there seems to be a general waking up during advent. In the city and here they are thronging daily to confession before X^{mas} Possibly

anent
 Johnson's efforts to adorn his chapel with the symbols of the Christian
 faith have been regarded as popish & not idolatrous by many of his
 flock who on more than one occasion, entered the chapel and broken
 into the church demolished them.

Dec.
1879

they may err greatly in this, but do not we err in totally neglecting it? Your Sister most kindly called before she went home. She gave me quite a full account of you & how you were occupied all w^h I was delighted to hear. I am glad you saw Prof^r Dawson. You know all I have of the Polyzoa & anything you want I will gladly draw write or send. Prof^r Hincks hopes to give me the name of that (larva?) with such beautiful tentacles. Shew it to Prof Dawson & see if he knows anything of it.

Hoping you may live to be blessed in fulfilling all your hopes & expectations

believe me

very very affectionately yours

W. A. Johnson.

These 'hopes & expectations' of which he was writing to Johnson must have concerned an elaboration of his entozoan collection, for preserved with ^{Johnson's epistle} ~~the letter~~ is a fragment in Osler's hand, evidently the

first draft of ^{a letter} ~~an epistle~~ to some authority recommended by Principal Dawson. For he says under the date "Jan'y 4th 1871":

I have been engaged for a short time in the study of entozoa and find great difficulty in getting the species described. On consulting Prof. Dawson as to who would be the most likely person

15-16

Jan.
1871

to aid me, he referred me to you. I subjoin a list of those I have met with and the creatures in which they are found; hoping you will be able to either name them or refer me to papers in which they have been described, etc.

*Canada Medical Journal, 1871-2, VIII, 104.

J.W. Dawson F.R.S. then Principal of McGill was largely responsible, ^{the financial backing} ~~before 1870~~ of Sir William Mac Donald, for the building up of a real university out of what ~~had~~ ^{had} been little more than a flourishing medical department. Primarily a geologist and a follower of Huxley he was much interested in the theory of evolution about which he held his own ideas: "The egg grows into the animal and the organism produces the egg again. This is revolution not evolution. But he was not only Principal: he held the chair of Botany & Zoology, given as one of the primary medical courses, and was at the same time President of the Montreal Natural History Society before which Osler's paper on "The Canadian Diatomaceae" had been presented on October 31st of 1870. This must have served to draw

versity ^{and} ~~this paper must have drawn~~ ^{his} favourable attention to the

young medical student who had come up from Toronto for his final clinical

years, ^{Principal Dawson} ~~and that~~ ^{he} ~~he~~ was duly impressed will ^{appear} ~~be seen~~ from a later episode.

Osler, indeed, had already begun to make his mark in the school and,

though doubtless a prejudiced witness, his cousin Jennette writes in Janu-

ary to his mother: "Willie has shed the light of his countenance upon us

this evening. I cannot tell you what a pleasure it is to us to have the

dear, merry fellow coming in and out and to look forward to our Sunday

Jan.
1871

treat. We hear his praises on all sides and from those whose good opinion is hard to win and well worth having. He is pronounced 'thoroughly reliable', 'as good as he is clever', 'the most promising student of the year', and finally, from a learned professor, slow to praise, 'a splendid fellow.'"

Despite his prescribed hospital ^{work} ~~work~~ which he speaks of as 'a serious business,' ^{and only} ~~he kept~~ ^{he found time for some} persistently at some outside reading, and meanwhile

^{with Principal Dawson I have no other engaged with} ~~did not wholly neglect either his expeditions for polyzoa or his entozoan~~

collection. ^{Specimen was obtained from my source, as his notes indicate - from the} ~~to this~~ ^{this just took him to the}

22/10/70. Examined a dorey in Montreal fishmarket. One small tape-worm, ~~one~~ Bothriocephalus and about two dozen small Echinorhynchidae were found. The Bothriocephalus occupied the entire cavity of one of the numerous caeca given off at the pylorus. The Taenia was in the duodenum and the Echinorhynchidae were toward the rectum. This fish I find is the Pickerel (~~see p. 259~~).

The Anatomical Society thought when he secured a dead Lynx for study: "5/3/71. Exam a cat ~~obtained~~ at Montreal General Hospital. Examined 5 Taeniae from four down in intestine - a small fine species with more vascular system very distinct" etc etc. Certainly over the usual presents of a medical student - of the 70's.

Spring 1871

There are other entries of the kind throughout the fall and during the next year, as these concerning the entozoa of the lynx and three days later of a rat, which certainly do not represent the usual pursuits of a medical student.

5/3/71. Examined the intestine of an animal obtained by the Nat. History Society of Montreal. In the duodenum were Ascaridae and lower down in the bowel 25 Taeniae. The animal had been dead a long time and the intestine had been thrown out and exposed to the cold for two nights. The greater part of a racoon was found in a semi digested state in the stomach. The other organs were not examined.

8/3/71. From a rat obtained at Montreal General Hospital I obtained 5 Taeniae. They were situated low down in the intestine. This is a small fine species 2.5 to 3 inches in length. Head very small no hooklets seen. The motor vascular system is very distinct.

Spring 1871

Whether he ever heard from the parasitologist to whom he wrote

early in the year, or whether he became ^{so} engrossed as a student in

the clinical studies, ~~which came~~ to be his life's chief interest,

~~and thus dropped his further search for entozoöns~~ ^{that} ^{purpose of} ^{was necessary side tracked} is impossible

to tell. ^{For immersion or another} Though he never worked up his collection of specimens for

publication ^{a line} he always ^{remained an interest} remained interested in the subject, as will

subsequently appear.* Chiefly through his active support a

*His early studies had possibly been stimulated by Casimir Davaine's book (1860) on Entozoa in man and animals, or more probably by Thomas Spencer Cobbold's Entozoa (1864). He probably did not know Rudolph Leuckart's Human Parasites (1867) though it was with Leuckart that he subsequently studied in Leipzig. ^{Chiefly through his active support a}

special course in parasitology was given to the Johns Hopkins students during his period there, and years later he was instrumental in securing for McGill a Professorship in Parasitology whose first incumbent was Dr. John Todd.

Die Parasiten newly from Cobbold (1867)

Spring
1871

lege Medical School just projected) ^{and two} ~~Two~~ days after ^{his ordination,} ~~being finally~~

ordained, it being Johnson's birthday he sends this letter

which Johnson evidently forwarded to Osler, among whose very

scant residue of old letters it has been found.

Rev. W. A. Johnson from James Bovell.

Clare-Hall,

S^t John's, Antigua W. I.
June 27th 1871

My dear Johnson,

As you may fancy my thoughts to day went by telegraph to Weston, and I am spending a deal of time in the old arm chair with you. The worst part of the business is, that although you are visible to me, you are as dumb and silent, as ghosts who come to earth. The paper cutter is in your hand and the Church Times is being opened and you are grumbling about ^{En} ~~Bennett~~ and ^P ~~Churches~~, but ^{hang} ~~hang~~ it all you wont converse. Well then I will come back from reverie to earth and take to writing. Here I am in the good Bishops house; over an examination and waiting to go down to Nevis to take up, as Rector, the United Parishes of S^t George and S^t John. It seems very wonderful, very mysterious. The way I have been led does not frighten, but it awes me - I have been so passive in it all, so determinately in-active, and others have so shaped out my course, that I feel inwardly tranquil yet so

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resolved, that I trust fully in Him and towards Him, Who can do as He wills with His Own. On Saturday the 25th In the Cathedral I was called to the holy order of Priest and now here I am flesh and blood set to do Gods Work. The time is short and there is a deal to do, but having stood so long in the Market place idle and no man having hired me, now that I have found a Master let me go in too for the ^[illegible] ~~poor~~. The Work is very severe and the area comparatively large and populous but still I can do a great deal. I ~~intend~~ ^{intend} to keep up my four services and those on Sunday on Wednesdays and Fridays; and I have just got our school going with 115 children. In St. John's Parish, I have been bundling out a Three-decker and Kitchen Table, and have got in a neat Chancel, proper altar, Lectern Prayer desk and 10 new sittings round the Chancel. By degrees things will go well. I wish you would send me the address of the Man who sent you the paper for the Church. I want to get as much as will do the Chancel Walls of both Churches. How I wish I was near you now. I dont despair. Some day when I have set the two old decayed parishes up and ~~made~~ the work easy, I will run back to the old place and end my days in the snow. My wife's health is very bad again and her feebleness increases very much. She has had a very large abscess in the hand which I was obliged to open four days before I left Nevis. I go down tomorrow in the steamer when I hope to find her better. I am trying to get you a collection of ferns which I hope to find an opportunity of sending through Halifax. I have not looked at an object since I left Toron-

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to, and I dare not even think for five Minutes of any work that is past. We wont talk about it. I long to hear from the Provost for he does give one such good advice and useful hints. . . . Now my reading for examinations is over, I will have more leisure for writing and dear Osler shall have a scrawl. Tell Jim I will send him a letter about the Medical Books. Osler can help him select them. Love for all. Farewell old fellow.

Yr affect

J Bovell

One of the few early
The earliest of Osler's letters which *have* come to light dates

from this period. That there are not more of them is lamentable, in

spite of his sharing the strong family characteristic of reticence re-

garding his personal *doings.* *It reads clear that in his early youth*
(50) But *(even)* then words *(ran from his pen, that it was left*

and he usually even later in life left it for others to 'dot the I's

and cross the T's' for him.

To his sister Charlotte from W. O.

Montreal,
July 6th [1871]

My dear Chattie First & foremost you may mention casually that though I am 'too proud to beg too honest to steal' yet I shall be reduced to one or other remedy before long unless a check

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arrive soon Lazarus was nothing compared to what I have been for nearly three weeks Drat the dimes. I wish we could get along without them. I got your letter today, after being five weeks from home ^{and} ~~I~~ thought it time. Marians baby was baptized on Tuesday afternoon & was honoured by my standing God-father I am so glad poor Frank has got home safe & sound, give him my love. Tell Molly to take her boy if he is a good one & not likely to take to drink & abuse her. If he does I will be down on him. Poor Hal! wonder he did not break his neck, he may yet. I am up to my eyes in work, but keep healthy & as we have had no very hot weather it has been quite endurable. Such a nice fellow is boarding here now called Henderson I knew his Sisters when I was at Weston He is a St Johnsite & a high 'un & good 'un too There has been a jolly flare up at St Johns Deacon Prime circulated two copies of an extreme sheet called the "Rule of Life." Mr Wood & Mr Norman were accused of it at the Synod & both ^{declined} ~~denied~~ to answer then but would answer their Bishop. Luckily they new nothing about it, but poor Prime has had his license taken away. On Sunday last Mr Wood preached a Sermon on it & acknowledged that though he could not hold it all himself he would not quarrel with any of his Parishioners if they did He took exception principally to "prayers for the dead." It was a regular "Confession of Faith" on his part & was splendidly given. I will send you a copy of the "Rule &c" when I get some surplus cash, but dont you circulate it (on the Guv's account) as it is strong meat not fit for Protestant babes to chew. I am glad Dr Locke progresses,

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tell him my letter is coming & hint that his has most probably been detained at the Dundas P. Office as has not reached here yet. Ask him to hunt it up. How does your lad get along in England. Tell him not to forget to hunt me up when he is on his way back 48 St Urbain St is my number yet Our Dutch ~~is~~ ^{is} progressing but not as rapidly as I would wish. I have so little time to spare for it. Forgive this scrawl, you dot the I^s & cross the T^s for me. Love to Mammy, aunt & all Yours

Benj

^{was the seen}
As we shall see, being hard up was no uncommon thing for one who

habitually behaved with his own meagre resources as Bovell did with his patients' fees which went out as fast as they came in. The "Rule of Life", the "extreme sheet" which raised such a rumpus at St. John's, must have been similar to some of the tracts often found in Father Johnson's possession to the consternation of some of his parishioners, being ^{strong} meat not fit for the orthodox, like Canon Osler.

The summer of 1871 was spent largely in Montreal according to his own statement in ^{one of his} ^{by sermon} a later address*, and it was at this time that he

^{An address to Yale Students}
*"A Way of Life." London, Constable & Co., 1913, 62 pp. 16°.

^{Particularly}
came into almost filial relationship with Palmer Howard, whose library

was put at his disposal. He was probably clerking in the General Hospital,

and attending the post-mortem examinations there, and he confesses that

"Much worried as to the future, partly about the final examination, partly

as to what I should do afterwards, I picked up a volume of Carlyle...."

"Our main business is not to see what
and in it read the familiar sentence, regarding 'things that lie dimly at a

but to do what lies clearly at hand"
distance) - commonplace enough, which, however, was the conscious starting-

point of a habit that enabled him to utilize to the full the single talent

often said he
with which he had been entrusted. It was, in his estimation, one of the two

trifling circumstances by which his life had been influenced, the first

Talk
having been the paragraph in Johnson's circular of announcement stating that

boys would 'learn to sing and dance ('vocal and pedal accomplishments' for

which he was never designed') - a paragraph which diverted him to Johnson's

school in Weston. The other trifling circumstance was the line from

Carlyle. *Thirty years later in an informal talk* to

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the students of the Albany Medical College, he ^{is reported to have} said:

The second point is with reference to the method of your work.
I forget exactly when it was, I think when I was a first- or second-
year student, I read an essay by Carlyle and was very much impressed
with a little sentence which read, "Our main business is not to see what lies
~~lie~~ ^{what lies} dimly at a distance, but to do ~~these~~ ^{what lies} which are clearly at hand,"
and I ^{believe} think, if there is one thing above another which contributes
to a man's success it is taking no thought for the morrow; let the
morrow take care of itself, but do the day's work well; see that the
duty which lies plainly at hand and is clearly before you is done re-
~~gardless of tomorrow.~~ I started in life - I may as well own up and
admit - with just an ordinary everyday stock of brains. In my
schooldays I was much more bent upon mischief than upon books - I
say it with regret now - but as soon as I got interested in medicine
I ^{only a} ~~only~~ had ~~the~~ single idea of doing the day's work faithfully and
honestly, as well as I could, and I do believe that if I have ^{had} any
measure of success at all, it has been solely ^{because of} and wholly in doing the
day's work that was before me just as ^{faithfully and honestly and energetically} actively and just as energetic-
ally and just as well as was in my power, . . .

How he found time ^{for} ~~for the wide extent of~~ reading outside of medicine
^{to acquire this familiarity with general literature}

has always been a source of mystery to Osler's many friends. Probably it
was at this early period that he began his life-long habit of a half-hour's
reading in bed before putting out his light. Most medical students, alas!,
are too engrossed with their work for such literary pursuits, desirable

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though they be. But he never ceased to encourage the habit, even in the
form of reading in bed, and the books he recommended* as a student's bed-

*"A Bedside Library for Medical Students." ^{appended to} Cf. Aequanimi-
tas, with Other Addresses. Philadelphia, P. Blakiston's Son &
Co., 1904, 369 pp. 12^o.

side library in all likelihood represents those ^{with which he himself became} ~~he became~~ acquainted with ^{in the way,}

Later in the summer he had a brief vacation at home with his parents,

where he put in some of his time studying German with his cousin Jennette, ^{and on his}
^{return to Montreal for his second year he} ~~with whom he subsequently exchanged~~ ^{forwarded numerous} postcards ^{which evidence his delirium of grammar,}
^{and to} ~~One of which on September~~ ^{them posted}
^{18th reads:} ^{especially of the German variety.}

to "Meine liebe Johannachen"

Donnerstag.

Ich emfing gestern Ihre Postkarte, und war sehr
heiter von dir zu horen Ich habe nicht viel gethan seit du verliest.
Ich ging letzten Nacht nach St Johann. M war da und Percy. Es regnete
sehr stark auf dem Wege nach hause. Unser schottische Freund predigte.
Der (D)diakonus Prime kommt bald wieder. Ich habe ein deutsches Lese-
buch fur Sonntags.

Montag 18^{ter}

Dies viel war eine Woche vorbei geschrieben (?) Die Kirchen-
versammlung ist hier nun und die Stadt mit Geistlichen vollstopfe. M
hat den Her Hodgson von Charlottestadt (P.E.I.) Er ist sehr hoch
und gut ein "Regel von dem Leben" Mann. Er predigte unvorbereitet letz-
ten Nacht von dem Text "So lange bin Ich bei euch und du kennst mich nicht?"

Ich will diese Woche zu dir Mutter geschrieben.

Wilhelm

variety.

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the Medical School
It ~~until 1870~~ ^{the} McGill ~~had been run on a proprietary medical school basis~~

The Medical Faculty of McGill, up to the time of the transfer of the school from Côté Street to the university grounds in 1870, had been a proprietary one and the teaching with the exception of some work in dis-
almost section was entirely in lecture form and given by general practitioners. *The chair*

The primary subjects, which Osler had already covered at Toronto, were in this day five. Courses in botany and zoology were given by William

Dawson
~~Dawson~~ the Principal, who was largely responsible with the financial backing of Sir William MacDonald for the building up of a great university

has previously been
out of what was then little more than a medical department. Primarily a geologist and a follower of Lyell, Principal Dawson (later Sir William)

was much interested in the theory of evolution, which however, like so many others, he could ~~not~~ *scarcely* accept: "The egg grows into the animal and the organism produces an egg again. This is revolution, not evolution."

for example,
The Chair of Materia Medica, fully stuffed with time-honoured drugs, was occupied by William Wright who incidentally had considerable reputation as a surgeon and subsequently became a preacher. Robert Craik held the Chair in Chemistry and later became the Dean of the Faculty. Lectures

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on the Institutes of Medicine which comprised what is now recognized as physiology and pathology were given by William Fraser a graduate of Glasgow; but there was no semblance of a laboratory until Osler himself in 1875 succeeded to the chair. ^{directed by} The course in anatomy was under a bluff Englishman named William Scott, ^{was Professor of Anatomy but} who is said rarely if ever to have entered the dissecting room, ^{leaving} but left this disagreeable duty to his demonstrator; and the material is said to have been obtained by the French students from convenient cemeteries, who thereby paid their school fees. All this, which resembled the Edinburgh programme of an earlier day, was soon to be revolutionized by Francis J. Shepherd, ^{one of Osler's} a contemporary ^{and intimates,} of Osler.*

^{privately printed}
*Cf. Dr. Shepherd's "Reminiscences of Student Days and Dissecting Room." Montreal, 1919; ^{privately printed.}

^{written at Osler's solicitation.}

Indeed, as will be seen, there were a ^{number of youngsters} few rare spirits among the students of the day, who in the course of a few years were destined to take over and instil a modern spirit into the pre-clinical years of the old school.

Of the clinical teachers whom Osler came under, there was Duncan MacCallum in midwifery who leaned heavily in his meticulous lectures on

the traditions of the Dublin Rotunda, but otherwise was chiefly occupied with a lucrative practice, so that the senior students were largely left to their own resources at the Lying-In Hospital. He was succeeded in time by Arthur W. Browne, the second ranking scholar in Osler's class. George W. Campbell, Dean of the Faculty and Professor of Surgery, was a Scot of strong personality, a power in the community, a vigorous and confident operator trained in pre-^{antiseptic} ~~anaesthetic~~ days, ~~for~~ Lister at this time was little more than a rumour in Canada, if even that, and the surgeon of the day operated in his ordinary clothes, collar, cuffs and all, the more particular ones, indeed, in a frock coat.

There was a short course, too, in medical jurisprudence, and the clinics at the old General Hospital were conducted by George E. Fenwick in surgery and J. Morley Drake in medicine. Fenwick was a bold operator of pre-Listerian type, whose house surgeons at the time were George Ross and Thomas G. Roddick, of whom more will subsequently be heard; and Roddick a few years later brought back from Edinburgh the 'Lister

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ritual' which was to transform surgery. J. Morley Drake soon succeeded

Prof. Fraser in the so-called Institutes of Medicine, ^{though he gave} but gave up the post

^{Cole} after two years ^{when it was} filled by a new type chosen from the younger generation.

But the ^{man of this faculty} teacher to whom Osler was chiefly indebted was R. Palmer

Howard. ~~He was~~ a courtly gentleman, scholarly, industrious, stimulating

as a teacher; and though the students of the day ^{felt} realized that he was de-

void of humour he nevertheless was popular with them and ^{even at the time was one of} the chief figures

in the school of which ^{in 1862} he became Dean, in 1862. Like his colleagues he,

too, was a general practitioner of surgery as well as physic, but where

he perhaps differed chiefly from them was through his interest in morbid

anatomy, an interest with which he succeeded in inoculating some of his

pupils. In a later address Osler gave this picture of him:

In my early days I came under the influence of an ideal student-teacher, the late Palmer Howard, of Montreal. If you ask what manner of man he was, read Matthew Arnold's noble tribute to his father in his well-known poem, "Rugby Chapel." When young, Dr. Howard had chosen a path - 'path to a clear-purposed goal', and he pursued it

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with unswerving devotion. With him the study and the teaching of medicine were an absorbing passion, the ardour of which neither the incessant and ever-increasing demands upon his time nor the growing years could quench. When I first, as a senior student, came into intimate contact with him in the summer of 1871, the problem of tuberculosis was under discussion, stirred up by the epoch-making work of Villemin and the radical views of Niemeyer. Every lung lesion at the Montreal General Hospital had to be shown to him, and I got my first-hand introduction to Laennec, to Graves, and to Stokes, and became familiar with their works. No matter what the hour, and it usually was after 10 p.m., I was welcome with my bag, and if Wilks and Moxon, Virchow, or Rokitanski gave us no help, there were the Transactions of the Pathological Society and the big Dictionnaire of Dechambre. An ideal teacher because a student, ever alert to the new problems, an indomitable energy enabled him in the midst of an exacting practice to maintain an ardent enthusiasm, still to keep bright the fires which he had lighted in his youth. Since those days I have seen many teachers, and I have had many colleagues, but I have never known one in whom were more happily combined a stern sense of duty with the mental freshness of youth.*

*"The Student Life." A farewell address to Canadian and American medical students. Cf. Aequanimitas and Other Addresses. 2nd edition. 1905.

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It has been said that the school borrowed its traditions ^{Layels} from Edinburgh. These were a mixture of work and hilarity, and though there were no rival political parties ^{engaged in} ~~with~~ active warfare such as Edinburgh sees in connection with its Rectoral elections, there was gaiety enough, and what were in the day called 'footing sprees' were bibulous affairs, for the expense of which the seniors were privileged to tax the freshmen. The annual 'Founders' Festival' was another occasion in which the students took untold liberties ^{with their seniors} and played practical jokes of a kind it has long been the tradition of unbridled students the world over to play. ^{Osler} ~~Osler~~ ^{Osler doubtless} ~~probably~~ entered into all these pranks with as much spirit as any, though at the time he was a 'teetotaler'. ^{for} ~~but~~ there are certain dispositions which do not ^{to be sustained by} ~~need~~ ^{require} any adventitious stimulus ^{certain} ~~to~~ ^{enlarge them, and} make them thoroughly enjoy themselves.

^{have during the fairest - when occasion offered,}
But ^{as the end of the term} better than most young men of his age he had learned to conserve his time, and though not a gold-medallist of his class he received an honourable mention of unusual sort. The prizes announced at the annual con-

vocation of 1872 were as follows:

~~The Medical Faculty prizes are three in number: -~~

- ①. The Holmes Gold Medal, (~~founded by the Faculty in honour of their late Dean~~) awarded to the graduate ^{receiving} who received the highest aggregate number of marks for all examinations, including primary, final and thesis. [*Awarded to Hamilton Allen*]
- ②. A prize in Books, for the best examination - written and oral, in the Final branches. The Gold Medallist is not permitted to compete for this prize. [*Awarded to George A. Stark*]
- ③. A prize in Books, for the best examination written and oral, in the Primary branches. [*Awarded to Francis J. Shepherd*]

~~The Holmes Gold Medal was awarded to Hamilton Allen, West Osgoode,~~

~~0. The prize for the Final examination to George A. Stark, Milton, O.~~

~~The prize for the primary examination to Francis John Shepherd, Montreal.~~

~~&c.~~

- ④. The Faculty has in addition this session awarded a special prize to the Thesis of William Osler, Dundas, O., which was greatly distinguished for originality and research, and was accompanied by 33 microscopic and other preparations of morbid structure, kindly presented by the author to the museum of the Faculty.

The gentlemen in order of merit who deserve mention: - In the Final examination, Messrs. Osler, Browne, Waugh, Marceau, Hebert, Pegg, St. John and Morrison. In the Primary examination, Messrs. Alguire, Hill, Carmichael, McConnel, Ward, Kitson, and Osler.

^{Orlin}
The thesis was never published, ^{and only} ~~but~~ a fragment of it alone remains.

~~It is~~ the introduction, couched in rather flowery and figurative language.

It being one of his youthful productions and his first essay in studies

from the pathological laboratory where he was to spend so many years, a

paragraph or two may be quoted, misspelling and all.

stef
In that Trinity of being - of body mind and soul - which
so marvellously make up the Man, each one has its own special ills
and diseases. With the first of these - the body - have we here
anything to do, leaving the second to be attended to by that class
of men whose duty it is, 'to minister to minds diseased' i.e. the
Psychologists, while those of the third class beyond a Physician's
skill seek aid elsewhere. Few indeed are permitted to end their days
in a natural manner, by a gradual decline of the vital powers, till
that point reached, where nutrition failing to supply the fuel, nec-
essary to keep the lamp of life alight, leaves decay to drag back the
fabric to the dust. . . . The number of avenues through which
stef death may reach us, the natural frailty of our bodies the delicate
and intricate machinery which maintains us in a condition of health
may well make us exclaim with the Poet

'Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long.'

To investigate the causes of death, to examine carefully the condition of organs, after such changes have gone on in them as to render existence impossible and to apply such Knowledge to the prevention and treatment of disease, is one of the highest objects of the Physician. . . .