

The Beloved Physician

By MARY RENNELS

It is NOT the things a man says that lives after him,—it is the things the public credits him with saying that burn into the brains of posterity. This by way of introducing to you Sir William Osler, world famed physician.

When you mention Osler to most people they immediately say: "Oh yes, he is the man who said men should be shot at 45 because by that

age they had outlived their usefulness." Just the same as they credit poor Pershing with saying "Lafayette we're here," etc., and so on down the pages.

In the first place, one learns from reading the life of Sir William Osler, written by Harry Cushing (whose kin are Clevelanders and whose pen is facile, inspirational and kind), Osler had too great a mind and vision to make such a silly statement,—and one learns further that he reached a stage where he didn't bother to deny it. What he really said was in effect that the most important years of a man's life are usually those between twenty and thirty; the things he does in that period affect the rest of his lifetime and one can tell by his conduct where he will be at forty-five. At sixty most men have completed their major tasks—few



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men do much creative work after sixty, Anatole France and other artists excepted.

Sir William Osler, a Canadian by birth, distinguished himself as the most famous of all physicians for generations because of his contributions to the advancement of that science. His laboratory researches were the most tireless and productive; he sat in professorships at four universities (acted as private physician of our own Senator Hanna), was knighted by the King of England and almost forced by popular demand, into the chair of medicine at Oxford. And yet when he began his career he had a tendency toward the theological course.

This latter information is enlightening. Having read excerpts of his philosophy here and there, I have found that he had a thorough knowledge of the soul of man, as well as of his body; he seemed to understand the problems of his patients rather than just their pains and joint dislocations.

He suggests that first of all you find a WAY to live and thus simplify existence by following it:

"I wish to point out a path in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err: not a system to be worked out painfully only to be discarded, not a formal scheme, simply a habit as easy—or as hard!—to adopt as any other habit, good or bad.

"Shut out the yesterdays, which have lighted fools the way to dusty death, and have no concern for you personally, that is consciously. They are with us all right, our yesterdays, working daily on our lives, but so are our stomachs and our livers. And the past, in its unconscious action on our lives, should bother us as little as they do. The petty annoyances, the real and fancied slights, the trivial mistakes, the disappointments, the sins, the sorrows, even joys—bury them deep in the oblivion of each night. Ah, but it is just then that to so many of us the ghosts of the past come in troops, and pry open the eyelids, each presenting a sin, a sorrow, a regret. But as George Herbert says, 'undress your soul at night,' not by self-examination, but by shedding, as you do your garments, the daily sins whether of omission or of commission, and you will wake a free man, with a new life. To look back, except on rare occasions for stock-taking, is to risk the fate of Lot's wife. Many a man is handicapped in his course by a cursed combination of retro- and introspection, the mistakes of yesterday paralyzing the efforts of today, the worries of the past hugged to his destruction, and the worm, Regret, allowed to canker the very heart of his life. To die daily, after the manner of St. Paul, ensures the resurrection of a new man, who makes each day the epitome of life."

I recommend the books for their literary and inspirational merits—not to mention the advice that no dyspeptic can have a sane outlook on life—and that the sensation of the first few hours of the day are the best test as to the body's normal state. The clean tongue, the clear head, and the bright eyes are birth-rights of each day. Read these volumes—and you will find a new leisure in life. For Osler reminds you—"There are sixteen hours in your day—there is no need for haste—but time to explore the delights of your mind and to accomplish much as well."