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COS417/54.46

From The General Press Cutting
Association, Ltd.

ATLANTIC HOUSE,
45-50, HOLBORN VIADUCT, E.C. 1.
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LANCET

Cutting from the

Address of Publication

76 MAY 1925

Issue dated

NOTICES OF BOOKS.

[MAY 16, 1925 1031]

Reviews and Notices of Books.

THE LIFE OF SIR WILLIAM OSLER.

By HARVEY CUSHING. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. 1925. In two volumes. Vol. I., pp. 685; Vol. II., pp. 686, and Index. 37s. 6d.

Osler was the son of a Canadian rector who held the livings of Ancaster and Dundas not far from the Western end of Lake Ontario, and the boy was fortunate in his teachers, who were a cleric, William Arthur Johnson, and James Bovell, who only took orders late in life, but at the time when Osler was his pupil was a medical man and dean of the medical department of Trinity College, Toronto. They were both remarkable men and somewhat eccentric. They clearly possessed a large share of Osler's affection, and though their methods of teaching must have horrified their stereotyped colleagues, they evidently exercised enormous influence upon their pupil. Dr. Cushing gives many letters from them both, and in one from Bovell, who was notoriously absent-minded, we find a sidelight upon Osler's possible choice of a career and also an example of the teacher's wandering mind, for the letter is dated August, 1870, and he says to Osler, "I do hope you will work on, for I have quite made up my mind that you are to get a first-class for the East India Company." The East India Company was handed over to the Crown in 1858, and had therefore ceased to exist. From Toronto Osler passed to the medical school of McGill University, where he was appointed quite shortly professor of the Institutes of Medicine, being then only in his twenty-sixth year. In 1884 he left Canada, to the deep regret of his colleagues, for the United States, being elected professor of clinical medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. And in 1888 came the call to the Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore as professor of medicine and physician in charge of the medical department.

One of the outstanding incidents of his Baltimore days was the publication of the "Principles and Practice of Medicine," the result of clinical studies based alike on personal experience and on theories fortified by the wide consultation of the best German, French, and English authorities. The book was written with difficulty; we can see that Osler was consumed with the desire to write it, but painfully aware of the labour that he would be undertaking, and of the calls that the task would make on his over-occupied time. However, the task was steadily accomplished, and the work was recognised at once as a great acquisition to medical literature. There were at the time several books, notably those of Taylor, just issued, Bristowe, Roberts, and Fagge, which covered the range of medical study to the satisfaction of students and of their examiners, but Osler's treatise appeared at a time when not only modern developments required recording, but when a new spirit of approach was badly needed in response to altered central conceptions concerning disease. The observation, lucidity, and powers of judgment displayed made the book an immediate success, for the author contrived to give the lessons to be learned from the latest pathological investigations in combination with his own personal clinical observations, while he boldly accepted new theories of disease and new classification in accordance with the progress of knowledge. It was at Baltimore also that he developed the admirable plan by which clinical medicine should come directly within the sphere of University training, being placed alongside the other great faculties, the associated hospitals and institutions being regarded as schools of the University. With such a record it is not surprising that, when in 1905 he was appointed Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, the mother country was ready to welcome her great Canadian recruit.

The second volume of the book is largely given up to a description of Osler's Oxford career, a career

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in which he was not only happy to himself but a source of incomparable happiness to others. After the strenuous hustle of American life the atmosphere of Oxford appealed particularly to him. He delighted in the congenial society, and the duties gave him ample scope for his activities and free play for his broad outlook on life, facts which are proved over and over again by the correspondence included in the volume. We have here also a very full picture of the war, for Osler, it will be seen, was a firm link between the medicine of America and Canada and that of the Allies. We can see from the letters included that throughout the protracted struggle he worked heart and soul for the sick and wounded, and when the blow fell that saddened the end of his life by depriving him of his only son, he reacted to it by a deeper immersion in innumerable duties in connexion with the hospitals under Canadian and American control. On p. 577 is an extract from a diary kept by a brother officer of young Revere Osler, describing his burial: "A strange scene—the great-great grandson of Paul Revere under a British flag, and awaiting him a group of some six or eight American army medical officers. . . ." The significance of the note is that Paul Revere, after whom young Osler was named, was the notable revolutionary who made the famous midnight ride in 1775 from Charlestown to Lexington to warn the population of the landing of the British.

These large volumes bring before us the manner of man that Osler was by the recapitulation of internal evidence. We see him as one with unbounded powers of sympathy, kind, learned, and humorous, a model physician and teacher, and a reformer. He was able to combine deep respect for all that the old offered which was worth retaining, and with this acute perception of the debt owed by the present to the past, he possessed an equally acute perception of the directions in which reliance upon what had gone before can be placed as a guide to what should come. There is ever a tendency for one who essays to put on paper the portrait of a rare and charming personality to record every scrap of fact or detail which may throw a light upon his subject; the result may then be to demand from the writer exceptional qualifications. Not that we mean by this that he need be either learned or literary—both of which Prof. Cushing distinctly is, and neither of which was Boswell, the classical biographer for all time—but he should have great powers of assimilation so that the homogeneous information can be mentally digested and arranged before it is published—that is, if he wishes to write a popular book. Prof. Cushing has (and rightly) as profound an admiration for Osler as Boswell had for Johnson, but many will find that he has allowed his biography to be overloaded with details some of which obscure instead of throwing light upon the hero. It would be fair criticism to say that the result of more concentration would have been likelier to obtain for a life of Osler the popularity which it deserves, but it would certainly be quite unfair to blame the author for not having done what he has never attempted to do, or to assume that he could not have done it if he wished. Prof. Cushing has decided to give us all the information that we may digest it and make the great deductions for ourselves from a work of the highest interest.

PSYCHIATRY.

The Inheritance of Mental Disease. By ABRAHAM MYERSON, Professor of Neurology, Tufts College Medical School. London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox; Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins. Pp. 336. \$5.

WITH this volume Prof. Myerson presents in an authoritative and lucid manner the results of many years' study of the hereditary factors of mental disorder. He discusses the whole conception of insanity and shows that, by departing from the use of the term "insanity," the approach to the subject as a group of "diseases of the human being to be studied in a