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New Books and New Editions.

SIR WILLIAM OSLER. Harvey Cushing, M.D. Vol. I, pp. 865; Vol. II, pp. 728. Oxford Univ. Press. 1925. 37s. 6d. net for the two vols., 50s. net in one vol.

In the whole range of modern medical literature there is no name which is more of a household word than that of Osler, or one which brings to the mind so many memories, even to those of the medical profession who had not the privilege of personal friendship. To countless medical students his "Principles of Medicine" (for it has been translated into Chinese, German and Spanish) has been a guide, philosopher and friend. So clear, so succinct and yet so complete in its range, the book rapidly outclassed its rivals as a text book of practical medicine. But it is not by this book that Osler will best be remembered, nor even perhaps by his honoured place in a long line of Regius professors at Oxford, but rather by his infectious enthusiasm for every kind of learning and the high ideals which he ever strove by practice and precept to put before those with whom he came in contact, whether as teacher, physician or kindly counsellor. No one was ever better described by Chaucer's delineation of the Clerk of Oxford in the Canterbury pilgrimage:—

Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

It is always an interesting study to attempt to trace the various influences which have played their part in the life story of one who has wielded great influence in his day and generation. No better example could be cited to illustrate the value of a sound and vigorous stock. Descended from a sturdy Cornish family, many of his forbears having fought and died for their country in the Royal Navy, William Osler inherited abilities which would have brought him to the front in any vocation he might have chosen. His father, after serving several years as an officer in the Navy, gave up his prospects of promotion to enter St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, as a mathematical scholar in 1833. But the missionary spirit stirred him, and immediately after ordination in 1837 he sailed with his young wife for Canada, where he was posted to Bond Head, near Lake Simcoe, at that time quite undeveloped primeval forest and only sparsely settled. It was a true pioneering life with no little physical hardship, and under such circumstances William Osler was born on 12th July, 1849. Of his early days he wrote fifty years later:—

"The most vivid recollection of my boyhood in Canada cluster round the happy spring days when we went off into the bush to make maple sugar—the bright sunny days, the delicious cold nights, the camp fires, the log cabins, the fascinating work tapping the trees, putting in the birch-bark spouts, arranging the troughs, and then going from tree to tree, collecting the clear sweet sap."

It was under such surroundings that the future Regius Professor at Oxford passed his early years; the youngest of a notable band of brothers, each of whom attained great distinction in the profession that he chose. As a schoolboy and as a medical student he came into contact with three remarkable men, whose influence moulded his outlook on life and to whom he acknowledged his debt in the dedication of his text-book. William Johnson, priest of the parish of Weston, schoolmaster and naturalist; James Bovell, doctor of medicine and professor of theology in Toronto (he afterwards received ordination) both helped to reinforce those deep religious convictions learnt from his parents which were guiding principles of his life. It was also from these two men that Osler acquired his interest in science and his facility with the microscope and section cutting. But to Johnson he owed another debt—his introduction to the Religio Medici of Sir Thomas Browne. To the end of his life Sir William remained steadfast in his love for the writings of the Norwich physician. He became an ardent collector of the writings of Sir Thomas Browne, and his collection, as can be seen from the recently-published bibliography by Dr. G. Keynes, was unrivalled.

Next to an edition of Shakespeare the first book he ever bought for himself was a copy of the "Religio," which was his constant companion, and fifty-two years later was laid upon his coffin when his body was carried to the grave.

The third great influence in his life was that of Dr. Palmer Howard, then professor of medicine at McGill University, Montreal. Of him Osler writes: "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 poem, 'Rugby Chapel.' When young Dr. Howard had chosen a path—'path to a clear purposed goal'—and he pursued it 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 his growing years could quench."

As soon as he had graduated with a thesis for which a special prize was awarded, Osler proceeded to London, rather with the intention of taking up ophthalmology than internal medicine. He joined University College and spent eighteen months working under Burdon-Sanderson, who was afterwards his predecessor as Regius professor at Oxford. It was here that he made his discovery of the blood platelets. Further study at Berlin and at Vienna followed, and he returned to Canada splendidly equipped for the appointment which was soon offered to him, that of professor of the institutes of medicine in McGill University. After ten years of arduous work, during which he was amassing that great clinical experience which stood him in such good stead in his later life, he accepted the professorship of medicine at Philadelphia. Ever a busy contributor to medical literature, he came to play a leading part in guiding the developments of medical education, and it is not surprising that when the Johns Hopkins University was founded at Baltimore the trustees should have chosen Osler to be physician-in-chief. Hither he migrated in 1889 to shoulder the responsibility of organising the clinic. Herein his knowledge of the organisation of the great German and Viennese clinics proved of real value, and in place of the appointment of house physicians for brief periods he established a hierarchy of carefully chosen long-term residents on the Continental system. It was during this period that the work by which Osler's name became known throughout the world took shape, his great text-book, "The Principles and Practice of Medicine." The mere labour of compilation and of verification of references, not to mention that of proof reading, apart from his work as a physician and a teacher, must have been tremendous; yet his enthusiasm carried him through to the end. It was at the end of this toil that he married—so quietly that one of his friends who, having dropped in and accepted an invitation to lunch, received this telegram in the evening: "It was awfully kind of you to come to the wedding breakfast." The wedding tour was spent in England, for Osler never missed an opportunity of a trip to England and the Continent, whereby he maintained the ties of friendship with his former fellow students and teachers. He had been elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1883, and later, 1898, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. The bonds which thus so closely bound him to English scientific life had their fruit in the invitation to the Regius Professorship of Physic at Oxford on the resignation of Sir J. Burdon Sanderson. Although there were searchings of heart in certain quarters, no choice could have been happier, for his amazing vitality and width of literary interests made Osler peculiarly fitted for such a position. Although the contrast between Baltimore and Oxford was a wide one, his adaptability and capacity for friendship allowed him quickly to take up his new round of duties. As the years rolled on his engagements became ever more numerous, and committees, addresses, and congresses filled his days through the ten years which preceded the War. Then the advent of the Canadian and later of the American troops brought him new duties and new anxieties, which he met with quiet determination and a heavy heart, having a boding prescience of the sacrifice which was required of him

in August, 1917, the death of his only son, Revere, lieutenant in the Canadian Artillery. He writes: "We have been steeling our hearts for the blow, but now it has come the bitterness is much more than we thought." When the blow fell, he bore it with stoic fortitude, throwing himself still more earnestly into the sorrows and anxieties of others till the end of his seventy years of life.

This brief and bare outline gives no picture of the man himself nor of his place in the hierarchy of the masters of medicine, nor can it do more than suggest the signal services which he rendered to public health. In the campaign against malaria and against tuberculosis he was a pioneer, and, indeed, it is not improbable that future generations will regard his influence in the advance of preventive medicine as his chief contribution to medical thought.

In the hearts of those who were privileged to count him as a friend he will ever remain a gracious memory. To the author of this note he was endeared by many acts of kindness dating from his Baltimore days down to a period of anxiety in the early days of the War which his kindly action did much to relieve.

"He,
To whom a thousand memories call,
Not being less but more than all
The gentleness he seemed to be,
Best seemed the thing he was, and joined
Each office of the social hour
To noble manners, as the flower
And native growth of noble mind."