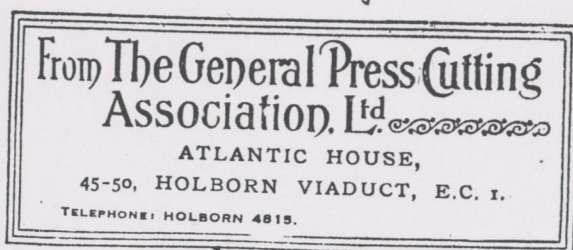


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M H. Cushing No. _____



Cutting from the Irish Statesman

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Sir William Osler. By HARVEY CUSHING. (Oxford: University Press. 1925. 2 vols. 37/-.)

Professor Harvey Cushing has undertaken the double task of writing the biography of a man and a tradition.

For many years before his death in 1919 the name of William Osler, sometimes Regius Professor of Physic in the University of Oxford, was becoming increasingly familiar in that vague way which is the most convincing mark of supremacy in a particular subject. Stangers heard of him just as they heard of Pasteur, or Lister, or Sir Almroth Wright, even though Osler's claims to greatness were of a kind hard to appreciate at a second-hand valuation.

"He has made no profound or fundamental discovery; but no one of our day has, in his life, teaching, and example, so radiated, far and near, an inspiration to his fellow physicians."

So wrote his old friend, F. C. Shattuck, although one may qualify his first statement when one remembers that Osler described the main characteristics of four almost unknown diseases.

Dr. Cushing has almost aggressively avoided any critical appraisal of Osler's genius. Instead, he has presented a unique series of letters, arranged and edited, and held together by a framework of historical and explanatory material. This method is peculiarly well suited to the subject, and is extraordinarily effective. The character of Osler is gradually constructed piece by piece like a mosaic until it attains a reality of its own, and the reader is brought to appreciate the nature of one who at the time of his death was the outstanding personality in medicine, and who, by an unchallenged agreement, has assumed his place in that illustrious lineage of British physicians, among such unfading names as Harvey, Linacre, and Sydenham.

Osler's life and work divides itself geographically and chronologically into three distinct parts: Canada, where he was born in 1849, and where he studied medicine at Toronto before taking up his first professorship at Montreal; America, where he established his reputation as a professor of Clinical medicine in the University of Pennsylvania, and, later, at the now famous Johns Hopkins Foundation in Baltimore; England, where he spent the last fourteen years of his life.

All through his professional career the same forces

were to be seen. At Montreal, he was the "potent ferment." Almost within a month of his coming to Philadelphia he had established a clinical laboratory. He was like "a breath of fresh air let into a stifling room." In Baltimore he wrote his magnum opus—*The Principles and Practice of Medicine*, which went into eight editions in the author's lifetime, and is known throughout the world.

The second volume of the *Bibliography* is entirely devoted to the English Period, which includes the years of the war, and gives an unforgettable picture of Osler's activities in an ancient and academic setting, when he lived in an Oxford suburb where

"the birds are wonderful—such choruses at 4 a.m.—but the doves are a nuisance when they perch on the sill at 3.30, and bill and coo until 5.30."

In Oxford the many aspects of Osler's genius found fullest expression. A lover of the classics and English literature, he rejoiced in the Bodleian Library, and, as one of the Curators, was able to locate and secure for it a long-lost copy of Shakespeare: First Folio.

His interest in the traditions of medicine was so intense that neglected or forsaken worthies were re-animated and spoke anew in his lectures and public addresses.

His name is now in the trust of lesser men; men who knew him, and who (in the words of Dr. F. H. Garrison) "shall not fail to keep his memory green and his spotless reputation from assail," and men for whom Professor Cushing's dedication is intended:—

To Medical Students: In the hope that something of Osler's spirit may be conveyed to those of a generation that has not known him; and particularly to those in America, lest it be forgotten who it was that made it possible for them to work at the bedside in the wards.

W. F.