

CUS417/3.16

NOTES FROM BOOKS 7 FEB. 1909.

Inserted in Pietas Oxoniensis

in Memory of Sir Thomas Bodley, Knt.

From E. W. B. Nicholson.

2 Canterbury Road
Oxford.

Dear Osler,

Your letter was the first thing that caught my eye when I arrived at the Bodleian as a half timer after a three weeks' breakdown. It had just been delivered.

I have waited so long to answer it in order to be able to tell you the sequel to various things.

When I wrote to you last, worries arising out of my statutory Visitorship of the Ashmolean, and my vain attempts to get the majority of my fellow visitors to do as I considered they ought to do by the University, had run my sleep very low, but still I hadn't had to take to drugs again.

Then came a meeting of the catalogue revision committee, presided over by the V.C. (as usual).

I have always been afraid of this Vice Chancellorship. Nothing can exceed the V.C.'s cordiality of manner to use in speech and letter, but nevertheless he is the greatest danger I have to contend with.

He has had no administrative experience himself (so far as I know) and he seems to set no value by mine, but to take up at once any opinion or suggestion opposed to what I think. He is an oligarch and a philoligarch, and not the man to have much real warmth in the "cockles of his heart" (? cockles = ~~cocculum~~ ?) for a socialist individualist like myself.
- Cocculum

Well, this meeting of the Catalogue revision Committee was not willing to allow me to be present for the latter part of its session though I and not the Curators are the sole catalogueing authority under the Statute. What I heard after the meeting about the resolutions led me to call on the V.C. at once, and that interview increased my apprehensions. For the first time for 2 months I couldn't get to sleep without trional. I took it at 4.45. a.m. and fell asleep about 6.30!

My sleep continued very bad, and in a few days the arsenic in my

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medicine began to poison me. I had continual nausea, and my appetite fell away wofully. It was days before I recovered from this, and my speel remained bad.

The Sunday after xmas it was wet and I didn't go out, but tried to sleep in an arm chair with my legs hanging down. At night I found I'd got oedema in them.^x Next day Dr. Gray told me to wind up my work at the Library and go to bed, where he kept me 10 days. He also thought he had let me go back too soon after my similar illness in March, and made me stop at home a further 10 days.

All the same the illness was milder than in March. Then it was 5 weeks before the apex beat got back to its place, this time at most only 11 days. And Dr. Gray was very much non plussed[?] by the slowness and comparative steadiness of the heart and pulse as contrasted with their usual extreme excitability whenever I am being examined.

I have now been doing full work some time, never get less than 6 hours sleep. and feel better than I have for nearly 2 years past. I forgot to say that with my increased worries in November spasmodic dyspnoea had come back, not this time of the Cheyne-Stokes type (or very rarely), but hard and rapid, plaguing me a great deal by day as well as by night. This has now disappeared again.

That same Committee has held two more meetings, one while I was convalescing, to which I got no summons, and the other last Friday. They have worried me greatly, but as I got seven hours sleep after their last meeting I must congratulate myself. I won't go into details of their meetings, because I want to keep my mind off them as much as possible. The V.C. is always in the chair.

Yesterday there was a special meeting of the Board to meet Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Mr. Bond in connection with the underground storage chamber. There is every likelihood that the Trustees when they meet in a few weeks time will agree to offer the money. But there seemed a very serious danger that they would insist on a minute re investigation for themselves of points which had been thoroughly thrashed out in Oxford, and that we were still an incalculable distance from the realization of our hopes. Now there is a chance that the matter may get before Convocation next erm, and the work begin in the Long. Fortunately the tunnel and lift questions have been

^x It seems to me that all my heart troubles have been due to temporary nervous causes, generally through loss of sleep. Every doctor tells me that muscle itself is strong.

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relegated to the future. I pointed out that they must be considered in connexion with the sanitary arrangements, and that it was desirable that we should wait for your return before dealing with them. Of course they will not in the least interfere with the delay, the completion of the storage chamber.

I was glad to find you leaving Paris. I feared that the doctors there wouldn't let you till you'd given a course of lectures at every medical school in Paris. And I am not sure that they haven't made you do so. I'm relieved to find that you haven't gone one to Lyon!

When I fell ill I was just going to write and ask if you'd accept from me some small literary offering at the beginning of the year, and if so would you kindly suggest something. Usually such offerings consist of what one already has, or of an author one has determined never to read another line of! You have probably read so much more of at all recent English literature than I, in your long railway journeys and on your voyages, that I doubt if I am likely to be able to remind you of anything. But I've put down on the enclosed some prose and verse things, and should be glad if you would let me have it back with notes of whatever would be acceptable. If there is anything else you'd prefer, please put it down e.g. any good illustrated books of British scenery.

At the same time would you mind saying if our 1909 Staff Kalendar was ever forwarded to you? If not, I should like to post you a copy for you to read the new preface and list of contents.

I suppose that when you've done Italy you won't be happy without attending that medical congress in Austria or Germany to which you were delegated by the University, and in any case you will probably not be here for more than a few days till October. I was just going to say that if I can do anything for you you must please tell me, and that reminds me that I haven't answered a question you asked me. The Radcliffe Library certainly had books in it as far back as second third of the 18th cent., when it went in for collecting Oriental MSS. It wasn't specialized for medicine and natural science till 1811. Probably when your author visited it the books were so few as to justify a sarcastic reference to its emptiness. Even if the shelves had been full (for the basement was not shelved till we were growing up), the disproportion between the accommodation they gave and the size of the building would have been, as it still is, ludicrous.

Sincerely yours,

Please tell me how you and Mrs. Osler are.

E. W. B. NICHOLSON.

Oxford.

P.S. to my letter. *Parland*.

I post you a copy of the Staff Kalendar. If you've already had it, the Biblioteer Vittoria Emanuele might like it: The Vatican has a copy.

All I want you to look at is the preface to the Kalendar, which will show you that I have tried to devolve on others all that, was possible to devolve, and the index to the supplement, the thick type in which will show you the new sections. The index of Library forms gives some idea of the extent to which we work by machinery.

Dr. Gray has been very poorly for the last fortnight. I know from him that it is some digestive trouble (his digestion is a weak one). I haven't seen him for the last ten days because I wouldn't bother him, but have called frequently. I don't think it's serious but I wondered whether if you wrote him a few lines, and asked him not to reply till he was quite well again, it mightn't cheer him up. I asked his page yesterday if any page was attending him, and he said Dr. Collier came now and again. I presume if it were it all serious Dr. C. would come at least daily. Moreover, I know Dr. Gray has seen patients at his home only a few days ago.

E. W. B. Nicholson.