

1028/63/2

CUS417/63.2

8 Sussex Ave: Toronto.

Tuesday

My dear Johnson,

You asked me last evening to give you some memoranda which might be of service to the compiler of Sir Wm Osler's biography.

You will remember that he came to us at Weston from the old Barrie School which in those days had the reputation of turning out - pretty strong men, well grounded in the 'humanities', who before they were turned out were rather precociously sophisticated in ways, not becoming a boy, & not adding to his ^{good} reputation ~~even~~ even when he ~~should~~ came to

man's estate. Whether Oles was greatly im-
 pressed with this spirit need not be discussed,
 anyhow I know that the moment he came
 under the influence of your good father, he
 was, like the rest of us, strongly impressed
 by him - He had a wonderful way of making
 boys see the greatness of Goodness, and in-
 spiring ~~them~~ ^{the moral courage} to seek after it without making
 themselves ^{kins} brags, or self conscious sanctimonios-
 cities.

It was your father, who started Oles
 on his scientific career, or at all events
 began ^{the development of} that path for natural science which

earned him a place amongst the greatest
 men of his time. It was our greatest treat
 when 'Old Johnson' could be had to take a squad
 out for a field day, hunting fossils, and he did
 not need much persuasion. I can still see the
~~man~~ ^{warden} wielding an old Prospector's pick (I wonder
 if it is still in existence - it should be preserved)
 & the most eager ^{boy} of the lot - to secure the most
 perfect Orthocentrus, or whatever lower Silurian
 relic the soft stone about Weston might yield
 Some of us were keen to retrieve a ^{few} good
 sections of Orthoceras to be diligently polished
 and converted into ~~the~~ prodigious Slesse links
 at 'Kent's Store' in George St^h (was it it Kent's).

Osler however was the Scientist of the expedition. To him was entrusted the delicate work of grinding down & mounting specimens for microscope slides. - Is it the same microscope of which you spoke last evening? Sometimes he might graciously, ^{after the manner of Bob Sawyer} delegate some of this protracted mechanical grinding on the water-of-lapre stone to ^{our} less skilled hands - it was not every day that a boy had a chance to help in the construction of a valuable scientific exhibit! - nevertheless experts pronounced them exceptionally fine - after Osler had put the finishing touches.

Osler ~~did~~ not strike one as being an

5
exceptionally brilliant scholar. His work
was always done & well done; but it was 'work',
not a flash of inspiration, that brought results.

It was no uncommon thing to see him during
'prep.', sitting with his fingers in his ears struggling
with some problem, & oblivious of the distractions
to which the rest of us had yielded, in despair
of overcoming the difficulty, trusting, Micawber-
like, for something to turn up for our relief.
And since Cassius often he would prove
the deus ex machina, & we would reap the
benefit of his wrestling with the (to us) un-
knowable. ^{- we were ready to confess that we} ~~we~~ "hadn't any more brains than
the Lord had given us."

6.

Physically he was rather undersized, but extremely wiry & well proportioned, a fine all round athlete, without being a champion in any particular line. I believe though he did ~~break~~ the record for throwing the Cricket ball at one of our term-end sports. Unfortunately however the Campus (if we may use a word I don't like, which our College athletes have today taken over from the Yankee vocabulary) proved too restricted for his powers, and the ball hit the high fence near the top. Such a throw was never dreamed of. But Professor Jones of Trinity, possibly not an unprejudiced ~~judge~~ ^{referee},

7
Came to the rescue, by the aid of most
compelling mathematical calculations - no doubt
they were absolutely accurate, as became the dictum
of an exact science - demonstrated to our entire
satisfaction that if that wretched fence had
not been in the way, the ball would have
hit the God at a distance that neither Rugby
nor Faton had ever achieved. Anyhow it is
not in records that our English schools yielded
their claim to the Championship on the
strength of Professor Jones' verdict.

Once we played the Villagers a foot-ball match.
This was in the days before "Rugby" & "Soccer"

Were recognized as 'exact sciences'. It was
 just primitive rough tumble, and our light
 weights stood no chance, pitted against
 the burly oafs that lined up against us.
 One huge bully threw himself ^{quite unnecessarily} ferociously upon
 a little chap who could hardly be said to
 have been actually in the scrimmage; but Oles,
who was, catapulted out of the vortex, &
 with one blow on the big fellow's ^{face} ~~side~~ ~~head~~
 sent him to the ground & thence to bed
 for a week. And Oles was not so very
 much bigger than the little fellow he had avenged.

9.

Oster had a bad attack of Typhoid or pneumonia during one of the long vacations whether he afterwards fully recovered his vigor I do not know.

In 1867 he matriculated at Trinity & I think it was his intention then to read for Holy Orders. He had a violent quarrel with the Provost not long after he came into residence. I never knew the rights or wrongs of it & have forgotten what it was about. However he felt that he had no 'vocation' and did away for Medicine - taking lectures at the Toronto School of ~~Medicine~~ and afterwards at McGill.

10
Aft. this I did not come into personal
contact with him for many years. We occasionally
corresponded. Later on he sent me a copy
of his thesis which just brought him fame.
It was all Greek to me, & I have forgotten
even its title - something about blood
corpuscles & things. After he joined the
staff at Johns Hopkins. I consulted him
by correspondence in regard to a sick child
of mine suffering from some mysterious
ailment which puzzled the best physicians
we could summon. Though unable
to do much for us without a sight of the

patient, he took infinite pains to give
what comfort he could when we stood so
much in need of help in these trying cir-
cumstances.

It was said that he, ⁱⁿ accepting Darwin
had become violently agnostic. I doubt
this very much. We all knew how impulsive
he was, & how his humorous flights
were often taken too seriously by matters
of fact-critics. But judging from his
remarks upon a book which I asked him
to read, I am inclined to think that
Denney so might have such a one
as he in his mind when he wrote -

12.
the hackneyed ~~doctrine~~ -

There is more faith in honest doubt & I mean sweep the ^{following} anecdote in print into no doubt - you have heard it. It was told me as an illustration of his quickness at repairs.

When lecturing to McGill the subject of evolution came up incidentally & a smart Aleck. wanted to know whether in view of the universal operation for appendicitis we might not expect Nature assisted by surgery presently to evolve a race of Super Men happily relieved of the useless appendix ~~out of existence~~.
Oates looked at him quizzically &

13.
replied - "quite possibly - at the same
I must remind you that -
"There is a divinity ~~that~~ shapes our ends,
Rough ~~how~~ ~~we~~ ~~will~~" -

Darling reminded me on our way home last
night of another instance of Odele's perspicacity
at throwing at a snark. The boys of "Johnson's
house" had to come over for class work to the
temporary school rooms near the station. The tedium
of the return journey along the railway track was
generally beguiled by some kind of game or
contest such as school-boys are wont to invent
for such occasions. One afternoon the stunt was

to hit every telegraph pole on either side of the track right of way by throwing pebbles at it from the track. Osler made a bet that he could do it if allowed a second try in the event of failure at the first attempt in any one case; and he won his bet, having to fire twice at only half a dozen of the targets.

I thought I could recall a full assortment of incidents that might help to bring out an adequate idea of Osler's school days; but when one comes to put down one's impressions we begin to realize how vague & intangible they become as the years go by. I am afraid my effort is what the old Proverb used to

describe (speaking of our Examination
 papers) as "regrettably jejune". But
 the outstanding impression left in my memory
 is that of a clear, straight-forward, ^{fearless and} un-
 assuming, fellow, whose influence for good
 made itself felt in the general tone of the
 school - an admirable perfect compelling
 the respect and affection of the boys &
 the worthy confidence placed in him by the
 Masters. But without full of fun & not so
 painfully impeccable as to discourage or
 disgust those who looked to him to give them
 a lead. He had to write his "impositions" sometimes,
 and did them with a good grace.

1028/63/2



Letter
received from The Rev.
Sains, Jan. 14th 1921

Canon

John read & then
sent to Dr. Henry Cushing

Dr. J. Johnson
22 Bloor St W
Toronto
Ont
Canada

Write him and
file - and then
submit to the
press (summary)

CS417/63.2