

OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

No. 44 - OCTOBER 1983

THE OPEN ARMS — THE STORY OF THE PLAQUE



READING William C. Gibson's account of 13 Norham Gardens and its future, planned splendidly in the Oslerian tradition, (*Newsletter*, no. 42), transported my mind back 30 years. On the wall of the house facing the street is a plaque recording Osler's residence from 1907-

1919. How did it come to be there? From the pages of the *British Medical Journal* and from my memory the story can be reconstructed.

The beginnings are to be found in a letter from that irrepressible Oslerolator, Dr. Louis Carlyle Lyon, a general practitioner in Ealing, who held the view that no doctor was complete unless he was a member of the Osler Club of London. The letter, headed Osler Memorials (*Brit. Med. J.*, July 29, 1950, pp. 298-9) listed the mass of eponymous clubs and societies, orations and lectures, medals and plaques, and ended with the plaint "no tablet on the walls of 'The Open Arms'."

Nothing further happened for the next two years, although the Club's meetings are faithfully recorded. Then another letter appeared (*Brit. Med. J.*, July 19, 1952, p. 161) in which Carlyle Lyon, now Assistant Honorary Secretary to the Osler Club of London, describes how, while attending a medical meeting in Oxford, he paid a visit of piety to the house to find a note pinned on the front door saying "The Bureau of Statistics has moved to other premises." "The spacious and once beautiful house," he continues, "was empty and in disrepair, and the huge garden a wilderness, overrun with weeds." The letter ends with the suggestion that money should be collected, not for repairs, but to erect a tablet. At this point the Osler Club began what proved to be a long drawn-out operation. In 1954 (*Brit. Med. J.*, April 24, 1954, p. 988), a Mr. John S. Meighan of Tilbury wrote that he had read Carlyle Lyon's letter of two years earlier and on a recent visit had looked in vain for the plaque. What had happened? Three months later (*Brit. Med. J.*, July 17, 1954, p. 177) the Club's officers were able to write revealing that the change of ownership of the house from Christ Church to the University had been responsible for a long delay, but now they were happy to announce the cordial approval by the University of Oxford of the plan to place a plaque on the outside wall. The cost — *mirabile dictu* — would be £40 and, although members of the Club would probably find the money, anyone interested could subscribe.

Negotiations commenced at once with Doulton's to make a reproduction of the Osler coat of arms for inclusion in the plaque. Finally all was ready. On October 8, 1955, the plaque was unveil-

The author of the leading article, Alfred White Franklin, is well known to all Oslerians. In 1928, he was co-founder, with W.R. Bett, of the Osler Club of London. When the Osler Library celebrated its 50th anniversary in May 1979, Dr. Franklin brought greetings from the Osler Club of London. At that time, he reminded us that his newly formed Club met in June 1928 in the Library of "The Open Arms" when Osler's books were still in place there. They were to come to McGill later that year.

The entries under Franklin in Earl F. Nation, Charles G. Roland and John B. McGovern, *An annotated checklist of Osleriana* bear witness to Dr. Franklin's long and active involvement in the Osler Club of London and other matters relating to Osler.

The author of the article entitled "Osler's 134th Birthday Party" is a younger, but equally enthusiastic and constructive, Oslerian, Charles G. Roland, Hannah Professor of the History of Medicine at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. Dr. Roland is an elected member of the Board of Curators of the Osler Library.

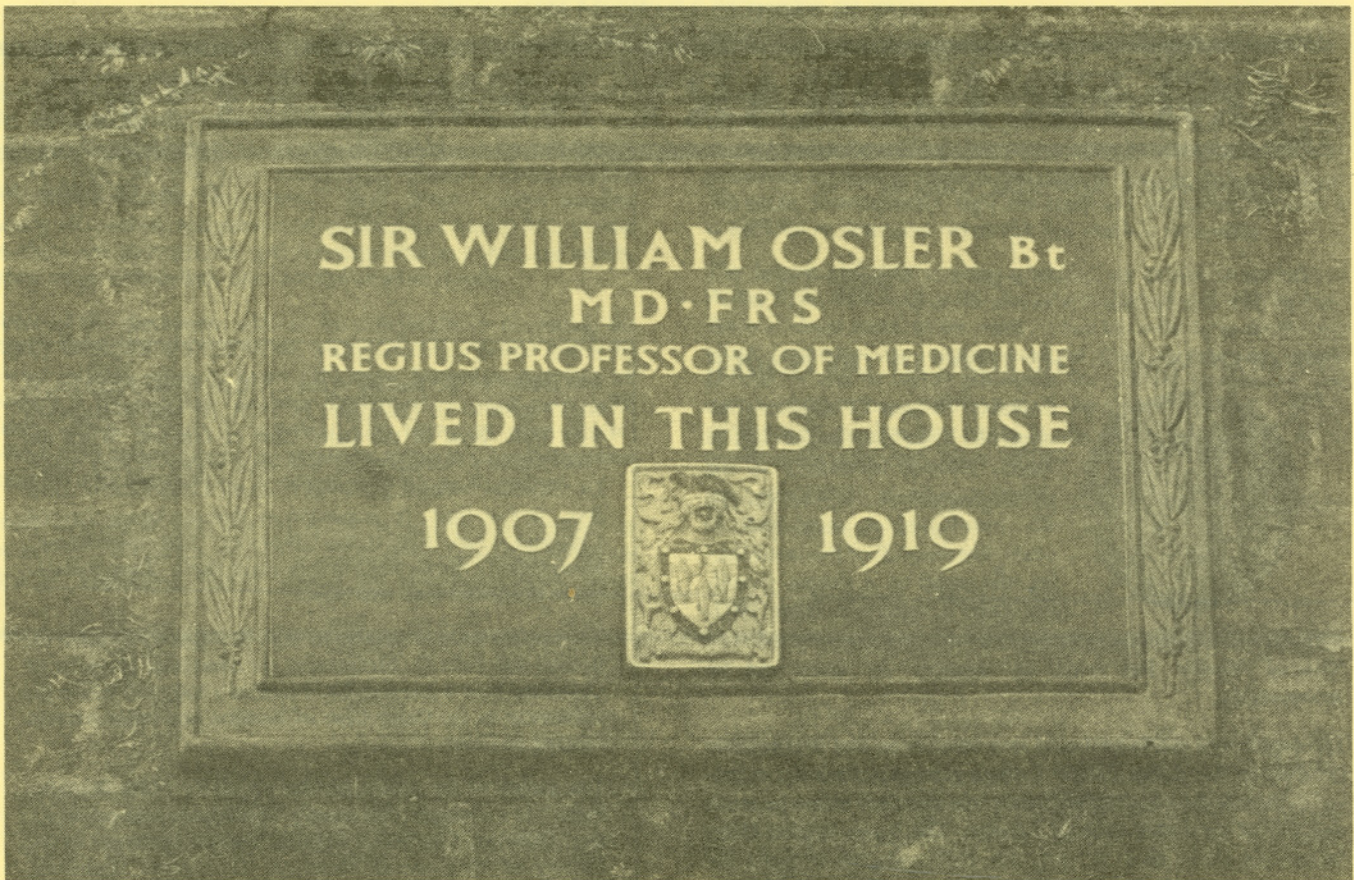
E.H.B.

ed by Professor George W. Pickering, Regius Professor designate and a founding member of the Osler Club. He was himself to live in the house from 1956 until his retirement from the Regius Professorship. A summary of his address is to be found in the *Journal* (*Brit. Med. J.*, October 15, 1955, pp. 962-3). At the ceremony, as bad luck would have it, my wife, a medical social worker, was regaled with a sad story by a one-time maid at the house who happened to be standing next to her. This upstairs/downstairs tale revealed how Sir William's arrival with a party of unexpected guests impinged upon the staff downstairs who had the job of feeding and watering them. No plaques for the staff!

Some journalistic errors in contemporary accounts of the unveiling ceremony both in the *British Medical Journal* and in the local Oxford papers led to the last reference, a letter from the Club President explaining that "with the plaque the Club had everything to do" but "the use of the house has of course nothing to do with the Club." (*Brit. Med. J.*, October 29, 1955, pp. 1090-1).

Carlyle Lyon can rest contentedly in his grave. The plaque is in place. Repairs to the house are in hand. The future is assured. And the Osler Club of London, whose resurrection after World War II owed so much to his enthusiasm, continues to flourish.

Alfred White Franklin
149 Harley St.
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Plaque on the wall of the Open Arms — photograph by D.M. Dickinson of Woodstock, Oxfordshire.

OSLER'S 134th BIRTHDAY PARTY

On Tuesday evening, July 12, 1983, over 300 people gathered in St. James Anglican Church, Dundas, Ontario, to celebrate a life that began on July 12, 1849. Osler's birthday was chosen by a combined town and university planning committee as the most suitable occasion for Dundas residents to join with the local medical profession and other friends in commemorating the great physician. William Osler's parents lived in Dundas from 1857 through 1882, though by the end of this period, young Willie was Dr. William and already a noted medical practitioner and teacher at McGill University.

The moving force behind the recent event was Dr. Watson Buchanan, a Glaswegian rheumatologist on the faculty of McMaster University and associated with Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals. With his enthusiastic urging the Dundas Town Council was moved to proclaim July 12, 1983, "Sir William Osler Day." The program at St. James Church was the major event of this celebration.

The program began with a recessional, the participants being piped to the dais by Pipe Major George M. Henderson, playing music written for the occasion by George Sherriff. Councillor John Addison helped to plan the program and was master of ceremonies, and Mayor J.T. Bennett officially proclaimed the special Day. Canon Philip Jefferson, of St. James, spoke on William Osler's connection to the church, of which his father, Featherstone Lake Osler, was the first and sometimes controversial Canon.

Charles Roland, of McMaster University, spoke on "Sir William Osler's Worldly Achievements," a brief attempt to describe

Osler's accomplishments and to explain his continued renown. Then Dean Jack Laidlaw, of the McMaster Faculty of Health Sciences, presented to Mrs. Dawn Bryden, Chief Librarian, Dundas Public Library, a group of books and a videotape, all written by Osler or relating to him. These materials will supplement the Library's already substantial collection of Osleriana.

Michelle Clarke, of Dundas, announced that a local citizens group has created an Osler Award, which will be offered annually to grade eight students in Dundas. The subject matter will be any aspect of what was referred to in Osler's time, as the "natural philosophy" of Dundas and its environs. The student writing the winning essay will receive a monetary prize and certificate.

Other speakers were Dr. William B. Spaulding, of McMaster University, who described Osler's roots in Dundas with an interesting selection of slides, and Dr. Michael Brain, also of McMaster, who spoke briefly on "Sir William Osler's Robes." On an unusually hot evening in Dundas, and with the church crowded with well-wishers, Dr. Brain perhaps deserves a special commendation, since he sat through the program wearing heavy robes that had once been Osler's.

The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of an oil portrait of Sir William. The ceremony was performed by Mayor Bennett and by Mr. Campbell Revere Osler, as a representative of the family. Mr. Osler is a partner in the firm Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt, barristers and solicitors, in Toronto.

The portrait was painted by Mr. Kenneth M.J. Tryon, who has made a gift of it to the Town of Dundas. This remarkable likeness, based on a group of photographs and reproductions of other paint-

ings, shows Osler in his fifties, seated, wearing his Oxford doctoral robes. Mr. Tryon, now retired to Dundas from Croydon, England, has made many such portraits over the years. Though he has never made his living as a portrait artist, it was obvious to all who saw his new "Osler" that he certainly could do so if he wished.

These talks and presentations constituted the formal part of the evening, and, after singing the Franz Joseph Haydn hymn, "Praise the Lord! Ye heavens, adore Him . . .," (the third verse of which was written by Edward Osler, William's uncle), speakers and audience adjourned to a reception in the vestibule. There they examined a fine display of Osleriana prepared for the occasion by the Hamilton Academy of Medicine.

Although this full evening ceremony was the main feature of "Osler Day" in Dundas, it was not the only event. That afternoon, Mayor Bennett, Dr. Buchanan, Dr. Roland, and a group of residents of the town planted a flowering cherry tree in the park just off Osler Drive in Dundas. The tree was planted only a few feet from the Osler cairn, erected by the Hamilton Medical Society in the 1920s. One can only hope that the tree will flourish with the same vigour as has Osler's memory in this town of his youth. •

Charles G. Roland

FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

During the 1982-83 fund-raising year of the Friends of the Osler Library, 300 Friends contributed \$11,500 to the Library. This is the largest number of contributors in the 11 year history of the Friends. Donors have been acknowledged individually in the February and June 1983 *Newsletters*. Friends who have contributed since June will be noted in the February 1984 *Newsletter*. The increasing number of Friends and their continuing generosity are a source of great help and hope for the Library's future, and we are grateful to all Friends for their support of the Library.

During the past year contributions went for a variety of special projects in addition to the printing and mailing of the *Newsletter*. Among them was the professional restoration of our copy of the *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) of Vesalius.

However, the largest portion of the donations was directed towards the purchase of research materials we would not otherwise have been able to add to the Library. Among these were two rare Montreal medical imprints, H. Guérin, *Merveilleux effets de l'eau froide dans le traitement des maladies, ou de l'hydrothérapie* (Montreal, 1863) and George Emberson, *Cures for the Curious* (Montreal, 1909?). On microfiche we purchased the final instalment of the "Registre des Procès Verbaux et Délibérations des Professeurs et Membres de l'École de Santé de Paris, 1857-1946 de la Faculté de Médecine de Paris," thereby completing a project that began nearly four years ago. Another microform purchase was the microfiche version of all Canadian Medical periodicals published between 1826 to 1910. Adding this to the Library not only preserves our holdings of Canadian medical journals from further deterioration through use, but also provides us with copies of many journals hitherto unavailable in the Library in any form. Finally, we were able to buy the facsimile of Gerard of Cremona's Latin translation of the surgical work of Abu'l Qāsim. This large facsimile, published also with extensive commentary, is visually the most spectacular addition to the Library in the past year. All of these acquisitions contribute to the research potential of the Library, and we are grateful to the Friends for making these developments possible.

With this issue of the *Newsletter* we launch our appeal to the Friends of the Osler Library for the 1983-84 academic year. Friends and readers who wish to contribute are asked to fill in the enclosed form and return it with their cheque to the appropriate address listed thereon.

OSLER LIBRARY RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

The Osler Library is planning to establish, on an experimental basis, several research fellowships. The purpose of these fellowships is to permit individuals to travel to Montreal to carry out research for short periods of time in the Osler Library. Fellows would receive a travel grant and a *per diem* during their stay in Montreal.

In order to carry out this experiment, the Library has set an initial goal of raising \$5,000. Towards that end, Dr. Harold N. Segall of Montreal has already contributed \$1,000. In addition, this sum is being matched by an anonymous donor who will match gifts for this purpose to a total of \$2,500. Readers and Friends wishing to contribute to the goal may contact Philip M. Teigen, Osler Librarian, 3655 Drummond Street., Montreal, PQ, H3G 1Y6. (514) 392-4329.

ADDENDUM TO ABBOTT'S BIBLIOGRAPHY OF OSLER'S PUBLICATIONS

Addenda to Maude Abbott's *Classified and Annotated Bibliography of Sir William Osler's Publications* have been listed in previous issues of the *Newsletter* (nos. 35 and 39). Recently Dr. Richard L. Golden has drawn our attention to still another, "Remarks on aneurysm of the abdominal aorta," *Transactions of the Southern Surgical and Gynecological Association*, 1907, 19:469-474. Volume 19 contains the transactions of the Nineteenth Session of the Association held at Baltimore, Maryland, December 11, 12 and 13, 1906. Osler's contribution was made during his second trip to the United States and Canada after moving to Oxford. It was on this trip that he joined in the celebration of his mother's 100th birthday, December 14, 1906.

WILLIAM OSLER'S NU SIGMA NU FRATERNITY PIN

In 1980 the Beta Nu Chapter of the Nu Sigma Nu Fraternity, through Dr. G.B. Maughan, made a very substantial donation to the Osler Library Friends Endowment Fund (*Osler Library Newsletter*, October 1980). This McGill Chapter has been disbanded and now Dr. Maughan has presented one of its past treasures to the Osler Library. This is an autographed photograph of William Osler with his Nu Sigma Nu fraternity pin mounted in the frame with the picture, a gift to the McGill Chapter from Lady Osler after her husband's death. We are very pleased to add this to our mementoes of Sir William.

A WELCOME ACQUISITION

Recently the Osler Library received a gift which deserves special mention — William Osler's copy of Archibald E. Garrod, *Inborn errors of metabolism: The Croonian lectures delivered before the Royal College of Physicians of London, in June, 1908*, Oxford University Press, 1909. The flyleaf bears the following handwritten inscription: "To Professor Osler with kindest regards from A.E.G." This gift came to the Osler Library from Dr. R. Palmer Howard, who inherited it as an item in the personal library of his father, Dr. Campbell Palmer Howard. It recalls the close connection between the Osler and Howard families, a connection first established when William Osler was a McGill student and the elder Robert Palmer Howard was his teacher.

REDPATH MUSEUM EXHIBIT IN THE OSLER LIBRARY

Earlier this year, the Osler Library hosted an exhibit presented by the Redpath Museum of McGill University. The subject was "Minerals and Medicine" (*Osler Library Newsletter*, February 1983). This has now been replaced by another exhibit entitled "Poisonous Marine Organisms." This current exhibit features nearly 50 mounted and preserved specimens of marine life, as well as maps and photographs, and concerns marine organisms which, when eaten or touched, are harmful or even deadly.

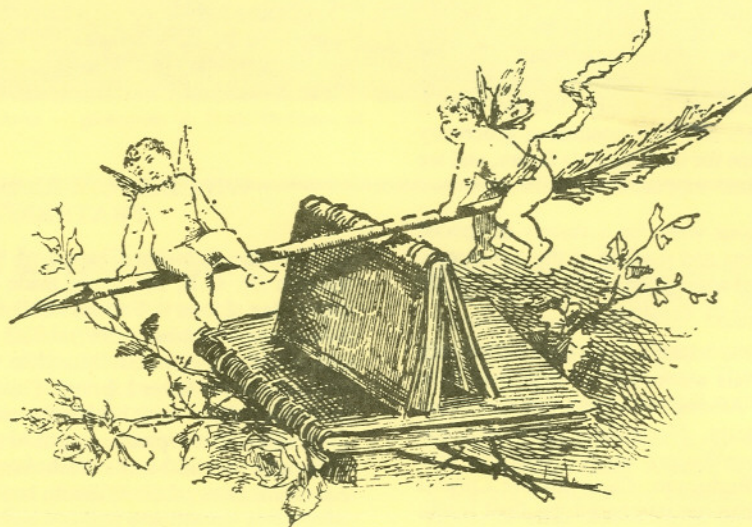
Some of the specimens, such as the scorpionfishes (including the deadly stonefish) are venomous, manufacturing a poison that is inflicted through stings or barbs. The most dangerous specimen on display is the jellyfish *Chironex fleckeri* whose sting may cause death within seconds to minutes. The Portugese Man-of-war, whose sting is less deadly but still to be respected, has transparent tentacles that may extend 30 meters into the water column.

More commonly encountered is the poisonous (as opposed to venomous) marine life such as the loggerhead and hawksbill turtles and the ciguatoxic fishes. Unlike the venomous fishes, these

animals do not have any devices to purvey their venom. Biotoxication in humans occurs when the animal is ingested or, in some cases, just handled. Frequently, these animals are only temporarily poisonous through an agent in their diet or through changes in their life cycle. Consequently, they are especially dangerous because it is difficult to determine when the specimen is poisonous.

The largest and most striking specimen on exhibit is an inflated Puffer Fish. Blown up to the size of a basketball and with its hundreds of sharp spines at the ready, it can kill even large sharks and other carnivores by lodging itself in their throats. At certain periods, it can be highly poisonous for humans to consume and may even have been referred to in the Old Testament: "Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you" (Lev. 11:12).

The exhibit has been prepared for the Osler Library by Susan Gabe of the Redpath Museum.



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