

OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

No. 32 — OCTOBER 1979

THE BOOK-PLATE THAT NEVER WAS



f the many queries which the Osler Library receives concerning Sir William Osler, one of the commonest is whether or not he had a book-plate. To the surprise of most of our correspondents, the reply is that he never had one. It is true that the books bequeathed by Osler to

McGill University do contain a book-plate with the following inscription:

FROM
THE LIBRARY
OF
SIR WILLIAM OSLER, Bart.
OXFORD

In view of its plain character and lack of any decorative component, Dr. Francis preferred to call it a book-label. But book-label or book-plate, it cannot be regarded as belonging to Sir William Osler. Francis has written, "I think it was devised by Lady Osler after his [that is, Osler's] death to distinguish the books that were to go to McGill".

However, there is good evidence that Osler wanted a book-plate. In a letter to Dr. Herman T. Radin of New York dated 31 December 1913, Osler wrote, "I am sorry to say that I have not got a book-plate. I have had many designs, but none entirely satisfactory, but when I have one I shall surely remember you." About a year later (4 January 1915) he told Mabel Brewster that his book-plate "is still waiting until I can find someone who can put in a moderate space something distinctive of the four Universities with which I have been connected".

In a reply to one of the frequent queries about an Osler book-plate, Francis wrote, "Osler never had a book-plate, though more than one was unofficially designed for him, one, I think, by Cushing". And recently we have located a postcard dated 25 September 1910 in which Osler asks Harvey Cushing, "Did you ever send me that sketch wh. you made of an Oslerian Bk-plate"? That Cushing should have concerned himself with this seems entirely natural in view of his keen interest in designing his own family book-plate.*

* John F. Fulton, *Harvey Cushing: a biography*, Charles C Thomas, 1946, pp. 135-138 and illustration between pp. 148 and 149.

One of the features of the Osler Library's semicentennial year has been the publication of a book about the Library. Elegantly designed by Robert R. Reid, artistically illustrated by Karen Coshof, and provided with an accompanying text, *The Osler Library* offers a pictorial tour of the Library interspersed with stories about some of the books, and the people behind them. Enclosed with the *Newsletter* is a brochure giving further details of this publication.

In view of this reference to Cushing, we asked Mr. Ferenc Gyorgyey, Medical Historical Librarian of the Yale Medical Library, if he knew of a Cushing sketch of a book-plate for Osler. Mr. Gyorgyey searched the Cushing Collections at Yale and found such a sketch in a volume assembled by Cushing and entitled "Sir William Osler, Correspondence, H.C. 1898-1919". With the kind permission of the Yale Medical Library, the sketch is reproduced on the next page of this *Newsletter*. Both Mr. Gyorgyey and Miss Elizabeth Thomson of Yale University testify that it was undoubtedly made by Harvey Cushing. The position of the sketch in the volume indicates its date to have been 1910. Obviously Cushing did his best to include "something distinctive of the four Universities" with which Osler had been connected. The note above the sketch reads, "This is the one we do not care for & the other walked away". The handwriting is almost certainly Lady Osler's. Her comment suggests that she was being consulted about the various designs and was at least partly responsible for Osler's inability to find one that was satisfactory. Also it should be mentioned that the added responsibilities and anxieties imposed by World War I probably diverted their attention from this endeavour. In any event, the final result was that Sir William Osler never acquired a book-plate.

E. H. BENSLEY

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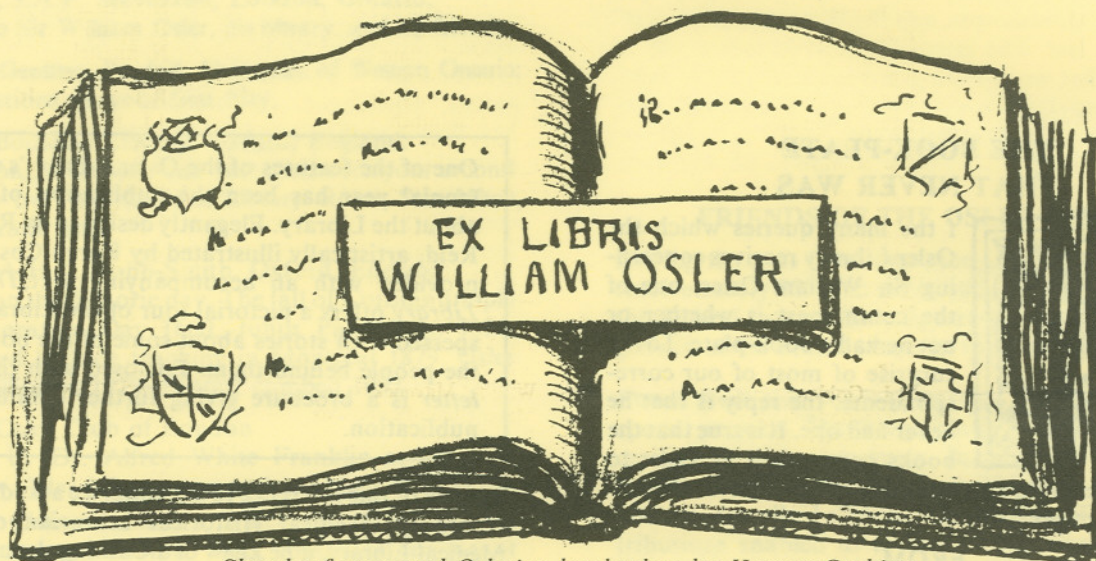
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Editorial Committee for the *Newsletter*: E.H. Bensley, Editor;
Philip Teigen, Osler Librarian; Karin Waterhouse, Editorial Assistant.

The historiated letter on this page is taken from Jan Baptista van Helmont, *Works: containing his most excellent Philosophy, Physick, Chirurgery, Anatomy*, London: printed for L. Lloyd, 1664 (Bibl. Osl. 2930)

*This is the one we do not care
for the other books are*



Sketch of proposed Oslerian book-plate by Harvey Cushing

A BEQUEST FROM HONOR MARY KIDD

The Osler Library has received a bequest, amounting to \$12,500, from the Estate of the late Honor Mary Kidd, M.D., C.M., McGill, 1947. As a medical undergraduate at McGill, Honor Kidd became a member of the Osler Society in 1945, the year in which women were first admitted as student members of that Society. She was the first of the women student members to present a paper to the Osler Society. Her subject was "Pioneer Doctor: John Sebastian Helmcken". On the basis of this essay, she was awarded the William Osler Medal of the American Association for the History of Medicine and her paper was published in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (21: 419-461, 1947). The Editorial Committee of the *Newsletter* welcomes this opportunity to recall Honor Kidd's outstanding achievement as a member of the Osler Society and to express appreciation of her generous bequest.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A FRIENDS ENDOWMENT FUND

Following a banner year in which we saw the opening of the W. W. Francis Wing, which has so greatly improved the facilities of the Library, this year brings together two important events in the history of the Osler Library. The first, by now well-known to readers of the *Newsletter*, is the fiftieth anniversary of the Library, celebrated in May with a symposium funded in part by the Friends of the Osler Library, and a just-published pictorial tour of the library called *The Osler Library*. The second event was the bequest of \$12,500 made to the Library by Honor Mary Kidd, a long-time member of the Friends of the Osler Library.

As a result of this conjunction, the Library's Board of Curators has decided to establish a FRIENDS ENDOWMENT FUND using as its foundation the bequest of Dr. Kidd. In addition the Curators resolved to invite members of the Friends of the Osler Library and others to contribute to this fund. Its first goal would be to match the bequest of Honor Mary Kidd, namely \$12,500, thus establishing the FRIENDS ENDOWMENT FUND at \$25,000.

When this fund is established, the income from the endowment will go towards the printing expenses of the *Osler Library Newsletter*. This in turn would free the yearly dues of the Friends for various special projects in the Library, such as the restoration and purchase of books.

With the enclosed green donor slip, therefore, I herewith invite readers of the *Newsletter* not only to begin or renew memberships in the Friends but also to contribute to the newly established FRIENDS ENDOWMENT FUND.

H. Rocke Robertson

H. Rocke Robertson, President
Friends of the Osler Library

A GIFT FROM THE MCGILL SOCIETY OF THE OTTAWA VALLEY

During the past summer, Dr. H. Rocke Robertson was the speaker at a meeting of the McGill Society of the Ottawa Valley. Towards the close of the meeting, Mrs. Beryl Corber, the Society's President, announced that, as an expression of thanks, a presentation was to be made to Dr. Robertson. To his delight, the presentation proved to be a donation of five hundred dollars to the Osler Library. This generous and thoughtful gift has been deposited in the newly created Friends Endowment Fund.

OSLER LIBRARY FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

Over one hundred people gathered at McGill University to attend the Osler Library's fiftieth anniversary symposium "Books, Manuscripts, and the History of Medicine" on May 29th last. The intent of the symposium was to examine in what ways bibliography, the history of medicine, and librarianship, still share common ground after fifty or so years of rapid development. Lloyd G. Stevenson of The Johns Hopkins University moderated the day's events.

Charles G. Roland of McMaster University delivered the first paper, " 'Dry, Dusty, Tedious, Accursed, Hateful Bibliography': Osler and British Bibliography". After surveying Osler's bibliographical activities, Professor Roland concluded that Osler's technical achievements were small and that his influence on subsequent bibliographical research was minimal. However, he had "the ability to identify problems, to identify problem solvers, and to bring them together in a way that was productive in a remarkably high proportion of cases".

Richard J. Durling (Institut für Geschichte der Medizin und Pharmazie der Christian-Albrechts Universität, Kiel) delivered the second paper, "Medico-Historical Research in Mediaeval and Renaissance Manuscripts", a survey of twentieth-century research in the field. After describing the means, chiefly published library and subject catalogues of manuscripts, whereby scholars locate relevant manuscripts, he turned to the tools assisting the deciphering of the manuscripts, and finally to those processes whereby mediaeval and renaissance manuscripts are collated and turned into critical editions. He concluded by urging historians of medicine to synthesize this century's work on mediaeval and renaissance manuscripts into their histories of medicine.

Professor Estelle Brodman of St. Louis University was the third speaker. She looked at the past and the future of enumerative bibliography in a paper entitled, "Looking Forward into Historical Medical Bibliography". Looking first at the state of medical bibliography before World War I, especially as it reflected the optimism of the time, she then turned to the technical means whereby the twentieth-century medical literature may be brought under control. But it is not enough to list and locate every relevant citation. There still exists an urgent need for artist-bibliographers "who must select from the total store; who must identify and study documents; and who must place them in relation to the milieu from which they emanated in such a way that they illuminate the subjects discussed".

In the afternoon session G. Thomas Tanselle of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation surveyed twentieth-century developments in descriptive and analytical bibliography and in editorial practice. He stressed the need to understand that all texts, whether literary or scientific, "are subject to the vicissitudes of the printing process". Indeed, "the very meaning of scientific texts is at stake". For this reason physical bibliography has relevance not only for collectors and bibliographers but for historians as well.

Eric J. Freeman of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, concluded the symposium by asking the question: "Medical Historians, Librarians and Bibliographers: Will They Ever Meet?" He began by urging historians to recognize that books as physical objects transmit and condition the authority and orthodoxy of medical science and practice. Furthermore books are social artefacts as well, mediating the interaction between scientists, practitioners, and patients. As for librarians, Mr. Freeman thought that being custodians of historical collections, they should act as mediators between bibliography and history. However, a preoccupation with the managerial and institutional aspects of their profession has replaced the exercise of their function as interpreter of the book. He concluded by saying that bibliographical knowledge and skill should not be seen as an option for the historian and librarian but as an essential part of their work.

Adding to the festive aspect of the day was the visit of Dr. Alfred White Franklin who brought greetings from the Osler Club of London and then added a wish of his own, "that the Library will continue to be the inspiration to future generations of medical students and post-graduates giving them a greater understanding of and love for their art".

PHILIP M. TEIGEN

BETHUNIANA EXHIBIT

The Osler Library plans to mount a major exhibit of its Bethuniana in conjunction with a conference entitled "Bethune: his times and his legacy" marking the 40th anniversary of the death of Dr. Norman Bethune in China. The conference, sponsored by the Bethune Foundation, will focus on the significant interests and experiences of Bethune in their historical context and will run from November 16-18, 1979. Further information regarding the conference may be obtained from the Bethune Secretariat, 772 Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal, Quebec, H3A 1G1. The exhibit will be in the Osler Library in the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building of McGill University.

GREETINGS TO THE OSLER LIBRARY ON ITS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY, MAY 29, 1979

From Mrs. J.A.F. Stevenson, London, Ontario:
Greetings to Sir William Osler, his library, and his friends.

From Mr. Geoffrey Pendrill, University of Western Ontario:
Congratulations on your first fifty.

From the Bodleian Library, Oxford, England:
Warmest congratulations and best wishes for your second half century from the Bodleian Library. Robert Schackleton, Bodley's Librarian.

From Dr. A.H.T. Robb-Smith, Oxford, England:
Greetings on this historic day. The fall of Constantinople 1453. Restoration Day 1660. Julius Pagel born 1851. Osler started bedside teaching in Montreal 1879. Osler Library dedicated 1929. Everest climbed 1953.

From the Osler Club of London
(presented by Dr. Alfred White Franklin at the 50th anniversary Osler Library symposium, May 29th, 1979):
The Osler Club of London, which celebrated its own fiftieth anniversary in April 1978, commissioned me, at its meeting on May 10th last, to bear a message of congratulations to you on this great day. I had seen in 1926 the beautiful library room at McGill with the shelves empty and looking hungry. The Osler Club of London met in June 1928 in the Library of the "Opens Arms" where I saw the books. But I, as an interne at Saint Bartholomew's, was unable to come to the dedication meeting in Montreal to see the shelves filled with those books. We did send an illuminated address appropriately bound, recently reproduced in the *Osler Library Newsletter*. I wanted to bring something similar now; but we spend our skills and our money on computers and microfilms so that there is no one left to do the illuminating and if there were the price would be prohibitive. I will therefore just read our simple message:

The Osler Club of London sends its greetings and good wishes on the fiftieth anniversary of the reception of Sir William Osler's bequest at McGill University.

Peter Daniel
President

Bill Dinning
Secretary

Alfred White Franklin
Co-founder

FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

During the past fiscal year, the Library was gratified to receive nearly \$5500 in contributions from 280 Friends of the Osler Library. Both figures indicate the continuing growth of the Friends since its founding seven years ago.

Funds from this year's donations went for a variety of special projects. The first and largest was the printing and mailing of the *Newsletter*. In addition, contributions supported in part the Library's fiftieth anniversary symposium, described elsewhere in this issue. Finally the contributions enabled us to buy a collection of reprints in French psychiatry and psychology and a collection of Japanese medical works. Both have significantly strengthened our collection.

As the years go by, the Friend's donations become more and more important to the functioning of the Library. For this reason, we are particularly happy to acknowledge their generosity.

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