



# The Oslerian

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

by PAM MILLER

### OSLER'S WONDERFUL ERROR

**President's Message:  
OSLER'S  
WONDERFUL  
ERROR**

**President's Message  
(Concluded)  
In Memoriam:  
Dr. William Feindel  
Call for Bean Award  
Applicants**

**Oslerian in the News  
Two Oxford Venues**

**Two Mystery Quotes**



**President Pam Miller**

Greetings, Fellow Oslerians!

One of the many reasons that I am very excited about our upcoming meeting in Oxford is that among the activities that have been so carefully planned by Ruth and John Ward, is a visit to Osler's beloved Bodleian Library. The staff has graciously agreed to put on a display of Osler's donations to the Library, including half of what he called the *Arabic Dioscorides*. Why only half?

In 1910, William Osler purchased what he believed to be a 2 volume Arabic translation of an illustrated herbal compiled by the Greek surgeon Dioscorides (AD 40-c.90). Dr. Anand Date, one of our distinguished members, has published a detailed account revealing how Osler came to acquire the manuscript for £ 25. He carefully tracked the individuals involved in the complicated transactions that led to the manuscript's arrival, first at the Bodleian and then to the Osler Library. (Anand Date, "The Story of Osler's First Four Arabic Manuscript Acquisitions," *Osler Library Newsletter* No. 106, 2006.)

The 2 volume *Arabic Dioscorides*, dated 1239 A.D., was brought to the attention of Dr. Arthur Cowley, the Bodleian Librarian, who recommended that Osler, a curator of the Bodleian Library, acquire the work. Although McGill was the principle recipient of his library, not all of his collection was sent there. Sixteen treasures were donated to Libraries in Europe, England and the United States. The 2 volume *Arabic Diosco-*

*rides* was willed to the Bodleian. Following Osler's death, however, Dr. Cowley discovered that volume 2 was composed by the celebrated twelfth-century Andalusian physician and scholar Abu Ja'far al-Ghafari, (who died in 1156). It was a separate "publication". W.W. Francis, Osler's cousin, one of the editors of the *Bibliotheca Osleriana* and the first Osler Librarian claimed that as volume 2 was by a different author, it should be kept with the books destined for McGill, a recommendation that Lady Osler endorsed. Dr. Cowley's disappointment can only be imagined.

In fact, the manuscript, now B.O. 7508, was the first half (A to K) of an alphabetically ordered book of simple remedies, drawn from various sources including the works of Dioscorides and Galen (d. 201) consisting of a botanico-pharmaco-therapeutic analysis of each plant. Al-Ghafari's important contribution, however, lies in the additional information that he supplies, his knowledge of the plants of southern Spain and Morocco, as well as his astonishing understanding of the synonyms of plants in such languages as Greek, Syriac, Latin, Berber, Spanish, and Persian. It was copied in 1256 on thick Middle Eastern paper in old naskh script and contains 475 entries and 367 colored illustrations of plants and a few animals. Later copies have since been located in Rabat, Cairo, Tunis and Tehran.

(Please continue on Pg 2 → )

## President's Message (continued)

According to a thirteenth-century historian of Arab medicine, Ibn Abi 'Usyabi'ah, al Ghafiqi was the greatest savant of medicinal plants, their names and their properties, and his work had no equal in this field. Max Meyerhof (d. 1945), an eminent historian of Islamic medicine, attempted to translate the herbal but due to the complexity of the work, was unable to finish it. Over the years, scholars ordered copies of illustrations from the Osler manuscript for use in their own publications. There are even a few early, extremely poor research photocopies and microfilms of the work which have been located in Europe but until recently, no one had undertaken the task of producing a master translation.

In 2010, thanks to an anonymous gift in memory of Montreal book collector John Mappin, the McGill Institute for Islamic Studies and the Osler Library hosted an international colloquium of scholars who would assess the significance of the manuscript, and to secure their advice on how best to make the manuscript available to the scholarly community. Each participant received a pre-conference digital copy of the work for consultation. Our excitement rose as layers of mystery were lifted... to be replaced by additional questions that demanded extended research. All agreed on the need for additional research, a master transcription and a facsimile edition.

In the meantime, the McGill University graduating Class of Medicine '61 generously donated funds to publish a facsimile reproduction accompanied by six



**Art historian Jaclynn Kerner examines the al-Ghafiqi Manuscript.**

essays by our experts. (The definitive transcription and a translation will be published in a second volume but awaits further funding in order to purchase release time needed by scholars to focus on the

manuscript.) In this first volume, the authors set the manuscript within the Greco-Arabic encyclopedic tradition and explored several themes. Spanish medieval historian, Cristina Alvarez-Millan, from the Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia, saw this work as part of an intellectual competition between eastern and western Islamic spheres of influence. Alain Touwaide, U.S. based historian of botany and medicinal plants, looked at Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica* as the scaffolding upon which al-Ghafiqi built his encyclopedia. Independent researcher Oliver Kahl suggested that the herbal represents an important dimension in the constitution of Arabic-Islamic medical knowledge. Leigh Chipman, specialist in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, examined al-Ghafiqi's sources. Former Librarian of the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies, Adam Gacek, discussed the descriptions of the plants, particularly the paleographical and codicological aspects. Finally, art historian Jaclynn Kerner of the State University of New York New Paltz, discovered that at some point in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Oxford Dioscorides and the Osler al-Ghafiqi were paired and somewhat altered to increase their monetary value. No wonder Cowley and Osler were fooled. These facts only add to the interest of the works and to the story of the marketing and collecting of Arabic manuscripts. Along the way, new scholars who shared our interest discovered us, thanks to our presence on the web. In particular, Eleonora di Vincenzo, a Research Fellow at the University of Pisa, using one of the microfilms and the Rabat copy mentioned earlier, has recently transcribed the entries for the letter *alef* (=A) into modern Arabic, the beginning we hope of the master translation upon which future translations can be based. Recently, another 17<sup>th</sup> century copy of the manuscript has been discovered. Based on our findings, our upcoming publication confirms the importance of the manuscript and opens up new avenues for additional research.

Osler would have been delighted to learn of the significance of his acquisition and its continuing contribution to our understanding of the role of the humanities in the rich field of the history of medicine. I am looking forward to our meeting in Oxford and I can hardly wait for our special visit to the Bodleian Library!

— Pamela Miller [pamela.miller@mcgill.ca](mailto:pamela.miller@mcgill.ca)



## IN MEMORIAM — Dr. William H. Feindel (1918—2014)

***[In the last issue of the Oslerian, President Pam Miller introduced us to Neurosurgeon and Oslerian William Feindel; he passed away January 12 after a brief illness. Below, Pam and Richard Golden, who knew him well, offer a tribute. ]***



Bill Feindel was above all a humanist. A man of extraordinary achievement and distinction, humanism was the common denominator that motivated and permeated all of his activities. In the Osler Library as the longstanding Honorary Osler Librarian, a position that held deep meaning for him, his presence and guiding spirit came to personify the Library. The Wilder Penfield Archive, a vast treasure of Dr. Penfield's life and research and the history of the Montreal Neurological Institute ("The Neuro") came to be preserved in the Library ("The Osler") through the efforts of Dr. Feindel, who was Penfield's literary executor and curator. A bibliophile with a special interest in Thomas Willis, Dr. Feindel's donations of his Willis volumes created a world class collection in the Osler. In 1965 he edited a sumptuous tercentenary edition of Willis' *Cerebri Anatome* with a foreword by Wilder Penfield.

Bill was a Renaissance man, a caring physician, neurosurgeon, researcher, educator, administrator, and medical historian. Always gracious, and with a keen sense of humor, he extended help, support and friendship in his personal and professional life, all part of the broad humanity that characterized him. Like Osler, he placed great importance on teaching and loved students. Once while participating in a tour of the Osler by a group of high school students, he showed some formidable 19th century surgical instruments. Selecting a trephine, which he deftly assembled, Bill called for a volunteer on whom he could operate! Amid shrieks of horror and laughter, a young lady stepped forward, and with much hilarity lived to tell the tale.

A disciple and a successor of Wilder Penfield, he was the author of over five hundred papers. An avid amateur pianist and violinist, music was one of his relaxations. An indefatigable nature resulted in many notable attainments including a medical degree from McGill, a Rhodes Scholarship and a D. Phil. from Oxford, professorships in neurosurgery at Saskatoon and McGill, Directorship of The Neuro, and the Chancellorship of Acadia University (his alma mater). Among his many honors was the Order of Canada, the Royal Society of Canada, and the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. In his personal pantheon of heroes, Wilder Penfield, William Osler, and Thomas Willis provided equal inspiration, and example. (Perhaps providentially there was a shared birthday with Osler.)

Penfield was mentored by Osler during his Rhodes scholarship days in Oxford and convalesced at 13 Norham Gardens after his ship was torpedoed in the English Channel. Later he wrote of an imaginary episode in the Osler Library in which he heard Osler's voice speaking to him. Dr. Feindel described a linkage between the two great men in understanding the brain's mechanism for speech, noting Osler's research on patients with aphasia from strokes, and Penfield mapping the speech areas of the brain in patients undergoing surgical treatment of epilepsy under local anesthesia. Both men were ardent admirers of Thomas Willis. At the time of the Willis tercentenary publication, Penfield wrote: "It is a happy circumstance that the initiative for this long-awaited republication... should come from a Canadian neurosurgeon, William Feindel." Busy to the end, we await the posthumous publication of Dr. Feindel's history of The Neuro.

Bill Feindel was a giant of a man in spirit, intellect, and achievement, whose core values were the advancement of medicine and science and the alleviation of human suffering. — We shall not see his like again.

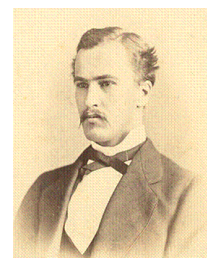


### ATTENTION — ALL OSLERIANS!

#### DO YOU KNOW U.S. OR CANADIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS WITH PROMISE?

If you do, consider sponsoring them to enter this year's William B. Bean Student Research Award Contest. The subject relates to medical history or humanities, and the papers will be judged based on their originality and scholastic quality. The award is \$1500, and successful applicants may be invited to present at a future AOS meeting.

***Please visit the webpage at <http://aosler.org/william-bean-award/bean/> for more information.***



**OSLERIANS IN THE NEWS** Oslerian **Charles S. Bryan** has been awarded the Order of the Palmetto, the highest civilian honor bestowed by the State of South Carolina, in recognition of his service to the state and nation. AOS members honored him as our President in 2010 (pictured at left), and the medical community of Columbia, SC inducted him into the Society of St. Luke in 2012. At right, in Columbia, Sister Nancy Hendershot is pictured giving him that Society's Medal on behalf of Providence Hospitals.



## AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY

**President: Pamela J. Miller**  
Montreal, QC  
pamela.miller@mcgill.ca

**Secretary: Christopher J. Boes**  
Mayo Clinic  
200 First ST SW  
Rochester, MN 55905  
TEL: 507/538-1038  
boes.christopher@mayo.edu

**Treasurer: R. Dennis Bastron**  
Tucson, AZ  
rdbastron@comcast.net

**The Oslerian EDITOR:**  
Joseph B. VanderVeer, Jr.  
10 Sugar Knoll Drive  
Devon, PA 19333  
joebv2@live.com



### Æquanimitas

*The AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY exists to bring together members of the medical and allied professions, who by common inspiration are dedicated to memorialize and perpetuate the just and charitable life, the intellectual resourcefulness, and the ethical example of Sir William Osler, who lived from 1849 to 1919. Its OSLERIAN is published quarterly.*

## A PERSONAL NOTE ABOUT OXFORD FROM THE EDITOR

The upcoming 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Osler Society in Oxford, held in conjunction with the Osler Club of London, promises to be an outstanding event. If you've not already, do register at [www.americanosler.org](http://www.americanosler.org) and reserve a room in the block being held 'til March 30<sup>th</sup> at the Macdonald Randolph hotel in Oxford. Our administrator, Renee Ziemer [aosrenee@gmail.com] can furnish information about many attractive things to do in Oxford. I would highlight **two venues** that we'll visit during the meeting that I had the pleasure of visiting when I took a ten day course about Shakespeare at Trinity College, Oxford, in 2002. The sites are:



### THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM

Named for the 17<sup>th</sup> century physician and collector Elias Ashmole, the museum is one of the gems of Oxford, and the site of our evening reception on Monday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. The museum has a marvelously diverse collection of archeological artifacts and paintings, and the Randolph Sculpture Gallery is the venue for the dinner that follows the reception.



A tour of **THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY** will take place on Wednesday Afternoon. One of the great libraries of the world, it's been used by scholars for four centuries. Five kings, 26 prime ministers, 40 Nobel Prize winners and many authors have studied here. It is a cluster of buildings at the historic heart of Oxford University and was founded based on the library of Duke Humfrey of Gloucester, and is now the largest university library in the U.K.



### MYSTERY QUOTES OF THE ISSUE

Below are two quotes about the namesake of our Society by two physicians who knew him well. Can you identify (1) who said each, and where; (2) his specialty; (3) when they appeared in print? Send your replies to the editor!

**QUOTE #1:** "Ever stimulating and inspiring, ever urging higher ideals, ever encouraging by his example and methods, never taking advantage of his position to humiliate a student before his fellows or his patients; never himself causing or allowing anyone else in his presence to cause unnecessary physical or mental pain or discomfort by rough handling, or the brusque, sometimes even brutal expression in the patient's hearing of opinions concerning a diagnosis of malignant or other diseases with fatal or discouraging prognosis."

**QUOTE #2:** "The most prominent feature of Osler was his friendliness, he had a liking for mankind and the happy gift of taking a real interest in others; he would go out of his way to look up people and if he heard of trouble he called or wrote for news; few can have had more friends. Whenever he came into a house an atmosphere of cheerfulness was diffused from him, and people enjoyed being in his company, it was impossible not to feel at your ease with him... He was accessible to everyone. The most humble individual could see him and talk to him, Osler made him feel at home at once and the conversation proceeded as between equals."

[Hint: Search for them in a museum!]

**We're on the Web!**

✓ us out at:

[www.americanosler.org](http://www.americanosler.org)

**AOS Members** — Please forward to the editor information worth sharing with one another for **MEMBERS IN THE NEWS** column, including awards and publications for yourself or other Oslerians. - JBV