



The Oslerian

A Message from the President

By Clyde Partin, Jr.

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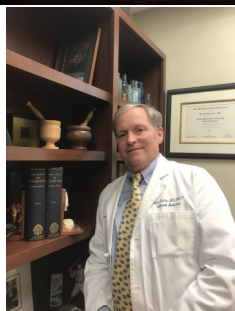
Oslerian Birthdays with a Shakespearean Twist - to Celebrate or Not to Celebrate

July 12, 2018 marked the 169th Anniversary of William Osler's birth. Unable to recall how Osler celebrated his birthdays, consultation with the Bliss and Cushing biographies of Osler was in order. Neither biography lists 'birthday' in the index but both start with Osler's birth. Cushing begins: William Osler, the youngest son in a family of nine, was born July 12, 1849, in a parsonage at Bond Head, Tecumseth County, near the edge of the wilderness in what was Upper Canada. Bliss's opening sentence: William Osler was born in a parsonage in backwoods Canada on July 12, 1849.

Resorting to a search in *Ask Osleriana*, 'birthday' registered eight times in *The Life*, two from AOS abstracts and the plural, 'birthdays,' elicited five more references. Not all of these citations were to Osler's birthday. In 1886, Osler received a birthday letter from his mother, urging him to return to Toronto, where the weather was "cool", in contrast to what was a particularly sweltering Philadelphia summer. (Cushing p.271) While in Bristol, England in 1894, to attend the British Medical Association meeting, he lunched

with the Regius Professor Sir Henry Acland. There in Acland's library, Osler first encountered the Linacre, Harvey, and Sydenham triumvirate of portraits. Even though this luncheon occurred well into August, Osler was so enamored of the trio, Grace Osler asked for permission to get them copied and the paintings were eventually presented to Osler as a birthday present. These portraits were placed above Osler's mantel in Oxford. **(Photo 1)** Osler revered the luminaries depicted in the paintings and subsequently much has been written about what Osler thought and said about the men in these paintings and their influence upon him. (Cushing p.401) The Oslers travelled with Dr. George Dock to Amsterdam in 1901. In a letter written by Mrs. Osler regarding the trip, specific reference is made to birthday activities: Her two men are very happy hunting old books; and incidentally a fifty-second birthday is recorded. She purchased "a lovely Keats for his birthday," she also advises. As a bonus, they managed to acquire some Boerhaave artifacts. (Cushing p.558)

Arthur Gryffe, in a talk to the



**President
Clyde Partin, Jr.
49th AOS President
installed at the 2018 meet-
ing in Pittsburgh, PA.**

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AOS in 2004, mentions a birthday celebration sponsored by the Toronto Medical Historical Club (TMHC), honoring Osler: On July 12, 1961 the THMC unveiled a cairn, made of stones from the rectory, at the site of the rectory, where W.O. had been born in Bond Head. (Photo 2)

The other birthday celebrations mentioned included those of Rudolf Virchow, Carl Rokitsansky, Abraham Jacobi, and Revere's second. Osler was keener on recognizing the birthdays of others as opposed to his own. Cushing confirms this observation: Indeed, one of Osler's outstanding characteristics was his tenacity for friendships . . .



never failing to send messages of greeting on holidays and birthdays. (Cushing p.24) In childhood, Osler's birthdays were recognized with an unusual degree of pomp, which coincided with a local political celebration of the Orangemen of the district, as described by Cushing: Hence William he came to be christened, and decked out in appropriate colours with a broad sash of orange and blue he was brought out on the parsonage verandah on his later birthdays to greet the procession which the other children came to regard as arranged solely in his honour. (Cushing p.15) These early birthday experiences, redolent of false adulation, may have attenuated Osler's exuberance for subsequent birthday celebrations.

Aging, as an unwelcome and inevitable concept, permeated Osler's thoughts. Bliss notes that "later in life Osler became notorious for his obsessive and pessimistic views of the impact of aging." (Bliss p.195) The daily encounters of a pathologist conducting autopsies could infuse a jaundiced mindset, at a true visceral level, of the aging process. Osler observed: As one ages, often the mind grows clearer and the memory more retentive, but the change is seen in a weakened receptivity and in an inability to adapt oneself to an altered intellectual environment. Of his own forty-second birthday, Osler said to a young helper, "Don't count the years. I'll get old fast enough." (Bliss p.196) A year later in 1892, on his forty-third birthday Grace graced him with a copy of Benjamin Jowett's five volume translation of the works of Plato. (Bliss p. 198)

1899 saw Osler grappling with the half-century mark. "He normally paid no attention to birth-

days but apparently resolved to try to go a little slower, or least not to be so spry," Bliss penned. (Bliss p.285) His other rather modest concession to getting less young was "to stop jumping streams," a spur of the moment decision made on the golf course one day, thus motivating him to seek the nearest bridge. (Bliss p. 285) "As a practitioner, and probably in his family and personal life, Osler was intensely conscious of the aging process, the decline of mental and physical powers, the growing uselessness of the old, the inevitable advent of senility (age), and of course, the inevitability of death," Bliss wrote. (Bliss p.290) His continued pontification on aging, as the number of birthdays mounted, culminated in one of his of his most thoughtful essays, *Science and Immortality*, delivered as the Ingersoll Lecture at Harvard in 1904.

Grace Osler provided an account of one of her birthday celebrations:

As we never paid any attention to birthdays, I was surprised to hear that W. O. would arrive at Canton, Sunday morning, June 19, 1904, to be with me on my birthday. Revere and I were then on our way to Murray Bay where we had taken a cottage for the summer. Ned Revere drove Revere and me to meet the early train from Boston. A twinkle in W. O.'s eye made me feel something unusual was in the air. He sat on the back seat with me. Directly we started he thrust a letter into my hand and placed his finger on his lips to signify I must not exclaim. It was Sir John Burdon Sanderson's letter suggesting his appointment as his successor to the Regius Professorship at Oxford. (Cushing p.644)

Osler's sharing of this letter was the ultimate birthday gift to Grace. Exquisitely in favor of the move to England, Grace was anxious to see Osler slow down.

At Murray Bay, Canada until mid-July 1904, he then sailed from New York to England. No mention is made of a birthday celebration. The Trollope affair unfairly gave people a skewed view of Osler's views on aging but at least prompted the Osler cocktail, "guaranteed to keep a man under forty." (Bliss p.325) In contradistinction to the whimsical Osler cocktail, the more ominous term 'Oslerized' gained some notoriety. If Osler ever gave a talk on *Bartending and Immortality*, it remains unpublished. Bliss further postulated Osler had "lost any belief in aging as a progress towards a heavenly reward after bodily death . . . He could not look forward in his own old age to many developments other than gradual decline, death, and nothingness. No wonder he never celebrated birthdays," Bliss concluded. (Bliss p.328) My so-

President's Message (Continued from page 2)

cio-theological training found wanting, Joe Lella was consulted, who sent me the following statement:

Osler's views on Immortality seem to me to have been summarized in a brief comment he made in *Science and Immortality* i.e. "I would rather 'be mistaken with Plato than be in the right with those who deny altogether the life after death.' To my mind he retained a hope for immortality while not subscribing to the certainty of the traditional church's (Christian) position on it. (Personal communication: J Lella, email 8 July 2018)

No acknowledgement is made of a birthday celebration during Osler's idyllic first summer at Oxford. The next recognition Bliss makes of an Osler birthday is 1909, "About the time of his sixtieth birthday he took a sabbatical on the continent, which was particularly refreshing, for he followed it with some of his very best writing," (Bliss p.336) seemingly discrediting Trollope's and Osler's theories on aging. Moreover, the Oslers travelled to Toronto in December 1906 for Ellen Osler's hundredth birthday party. She too had defied Trollope's musings and told reporters that "Willie's views about old age were just one of his jokes." (Bliss p.338) Possibly Osler's tepid embracement of his birthdays could have been hereditary: His mother's one-hundredth birthday, which excited other people more than the hale and hearty recipient of their attentions in the Wellesley Street house, for she had had considerable experience with birthdays. (Cushing II p.72)

In 1914, Osler turned a Medicare-sounding sixty-five, but "apparently ignored the occasion." (Bliss p.401)

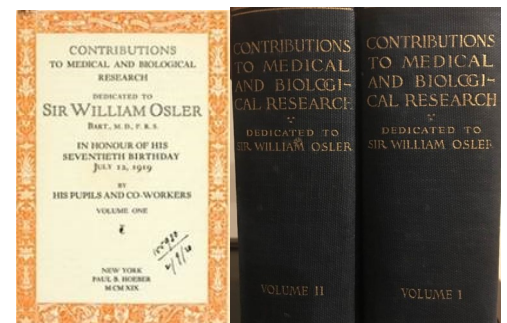
Revere's birthday was 28 December 1895. After his death on 29 August 1917, Revere's artifacts from France did not arrive at Norham Gardens until 27 December, the day before Revere would have been 22. The package remained unopened, as Grace could find no will to do so. "It seems the end of everything," she wrote in a letter to Marjorie Fletcher, dated that same day. (Bliss p.445)

In what would seem to be the irony of ironies, Osler's celebration of seventy years of life foreshadowed the beginning of the end. A birthday party was hosted in London by Clifford Allbutt. Osler's *Festschrift* was not ready, so a dummy copy was provided. On the train back to Oxford he began to cough, "an anaphylactic birthday bronchial shock." In bed for a week, he rallied, remarking, "I have driven the machine hard in those early days. Still, I did not drink, & have no spirochaetes." (Bliss p.464-465)

A prolonged family holiday on the Isle of Jer-

sey went well, but the cough returned after a hard journey back from Edinburgh in late September. Throughout November and December, Osler's condition deteriorated. The first copy of the festschrift, *Contributions to Medical and Biological Research, Dedicated to Sir William Osler . . . In Honour of his Seventieth Birthday, July 12, 1919, by His Pupils and Co-Workers*, arrived at Norham Gardens on 27 December, but too late for the ill Osler to appreciate. (Bliss p. 475) **(Photo 3)** Revere's birthday went unheralded on 28 December. In his novel, *The Melody*, the writer Jim Crace reminds us "how old age was blizzarded with all the debris of our days." Perhaps Osler sought to limit that debris by ignoring his birthdays – followed by the need to internalize and absorb the unrelenting fallout precipitated by Revere's death. "The Fates do not allow the good fortune that has followed me to go with me to the grave – call no man happy till he dies," Osler heartrendingly wrote, perpetuating his disheartening ruminations on aging.

On December 29th, nearly halfway to his next birthday, Osler died, entering his own version of the Afterlife, presumably an Afterlife bereft of birthday celebrations. Though some might claim otherwise, his mortalness was proven. Yet his immortality survives in so many ways.



AOS Montreal 2019 Meeting Preview May 12-15

The 49th meeting of the Society will be held in Montreal, Quebec, from May 12 to 15, 2019. Several special projects have been proposed to mark the 100th anniversary of William Osler's death. One of these is the development of an Osler book collection which will be accessible to today's students and other individuals throughout the world. The basis of such a collection has been started at McGill for the Physician Apprenticeship component of its medical school curriculum. The books are stored in the Osler Library in a special cabinet and have a [dedicated listing in the Library catalogue](https://mcgill.worldcat.org/profiles/oslerfellowslibrary/lists/3031413) <https://mcgill.worldcat.org/profiles/oslerfellowslibrary/lists/3031413>

For this project, every AOS member is asked to identify one book (exceptionally two or more if they are part of a coherent series) to add to the collection, reflecting what they have found valuable in their own medical practice, teaching, personal philosophy, etc. The book can be a physical copy donated by the member or a title suggestion. In the latter case, the Library will either reassign the book from its current holdings or purchase a new one (a donation to the Library to cover the expense would be welcome of course, but is not necessary).

Every contributor will be asked to write a short note explaining the basis for their book selection. This can be hand written or printed on a specially designed frontespiece (illustrated in next column) which you will be asked to complete or sign at the May meeting. Information about where to send your title suggestion will come via email in the early fall.

In addition to the Society's usual stimulating papers, there will be three Monday af-

ternoon

events: a special tour of the Osler Library and exhibits on Leonardo da Vinci (2019 is also the 500th anniversary of his death) and Osler "the man you didn't know". Additional extra-curricular opportunities include a walk-

ing tour of the "Square Mile" area of Montreal (located near the Conference Hotel) and visits to the Maude Abbott Medical Museum and the Montreal Neurological Institute. We also hope that members of the extended Osler family will attend.

The weather in Montreal in May is usually excellent - sunny and around 20 degrees Celsius (68 F) as an afternoon high. There are also many other things to see in the City if you have a few extra days to spend before or after the meeting, including the historic Old Port, several interesting Museums [such as the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Pointes-à-

Osler Fellows' Library



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Continued on page 5

Caillièrre (Montreal archeology), and the McCord Museum (social history)], Mount Royal Park (designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, landscape architect of New York's Central Park), Nôtre Dame Basilica, and St. Joseph's Oratory.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

Montreal Local Organizing Committee :

Rick Fraser
Pam Miller
Mary Hague-Yearl

Rolando Del Maestro
Joan O'Malley
Steph Pang
Ke Xuan
Melanie Babinski

Future meeting dates:

2020 – Pasadena, California
2021 - Galveston, Texas

**American Osler Society Committee Membership
2018-2019**

COMMITTEE	CURRENT CHAIR	CURRENT MEMBERS	NEW CHAIR	ROTATES OFF	NEW MEMBERS
Bean Award	J.Murray	S.Podolsky, B.Thompson, J.Wright	J. Wright	J.Murray	J.Harris
McGovern Award*	J.VanderVeer	P. Mueller, H. Swick	L.Drevlow	H.Swick	None
Lifetime Achievement Award	C.Pierach	J.Barondess, B.Fye, S. Moss,	No Change	S.Moss	B.Mennel
Nominating*	J.VanderVeer	P. Mueller, H. Swick	L.Drevlow	H.Swick	None
Finance	M. Molina	B. Cooper, M. Stone	No Change	None	None
Membership#	M.Molina	C.Boes, W.Evans, M.Jones	M. Jones	M.Molina	C.Fulkerson
Publications	M. Jones	W. Roberts, J. Greene, M. Malloy, H. Travers	No Change	W.Roberts, J.Greene	None
Annual Meeting† – Program Committee	C.Partin	T.Frank, J.Harris, M.Molina, B.Silverman, J.Wright	M.Molina	T.Frank, J.Harris, C.Partin, B.Silverman, J.Wright	M.Jones, E.Matteson, G.Frank, M.Trotter
Annual Meeting – Local Arrangements Committee	J.Erlen	G.Duker, K.Bettermann, D.Lanska (ExCmtLiason)	Rick Fraser	G.Duker, K.Bettermann, D.Lanska	P.Miller, R.DelMaestro

The Hellenism of William Osler and the New Religion of Medicine

By Joongyu Daniel Song

Let us put down our rose-tinted lenses of admiration for Sir William Osler, move beyond the quotes, quips, and aphorisms we have memorized as his followers, and attempt to understand his vast writings on medicine in historical context.

Such a pursuit hinges on addressing two great mysteries that emerge on any reading of Osler's essays on medicine. First is his curious relationship to religion – why does Osler so readily clothe his vision for medicine in religious language when he himself kept his personal faith a secret (and perhaps did not have one at all)? Second is Osler's synthesis of Greek and Christian thought. It was not enough for Osler to draw from the Bible, and he draws equally often from Greek sources. What was the thematic cohesion he perceived between Greek and Christian texts and how did it relate to the plight of the medical profession?

The answers to these mysteries – and the key to uncovering the moral and historical significance of Osler's vision – lies in contextualizing the person of Osler in the history of secularization in Victorian England and the fascinating relationship to religion that emerged in that era.

Osler was a man intimately acquainted in the intellectual cultural climate of Victorian England. Despite his origins in Canada and his long career in the United States, he was an Englishman at heart. He made regular efforts to travel to England, the country of his ancestors, throughout his life, and at one point in his career, became Regius Professor at Oxford University, where he would have been steeped in the high intellectual circles of England. In fact, Osler arrived at Oxford in the wake of towering Victorian intellectuals – names like Matthew Arnold and Benjamin Jowett, who, as Oslerians are aware, became some of Osler's favorite sources.

The predominant Victorian experience – the concern that underlies the writings of Arnold,

Jowett, and eventually Osler – was the problem of secularization. Throughout the 19th century, the Christian tradition that had long served as the intellectual and moral foundation of the Western world lost its hegemonic grip. New methods of Biblical criticism from Germany showed the text to be human and fallible. The publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* inspired a philosophical revolution and its engine was the idea that all of natural and human history was a self-driven process that did not require the guidance of a divine agent. These challenges to Christianity – and religion in general – paved the way for an “enlightened” optimism and for an age of progress and reform, in which the use of human reason, not obedience to dogmatic tradition, would solve mankind's most vexing problems.

Secularization, however, was a two-edge sword, for while it boded progress, it also threatened chaos. English society was coming apart at the seams from the pressures of the Industrial Revolution, with its increasingly untenable mix of the materialistic individualism of the newly wealthy merchant class and the bitter desperation of the poor and oppressed workers. It seemed progress needed to be tamed by moral direction and social cohesion, but the institution that perhaps could have served that role – the Anglican Church – was slowly shrinking in influence amidst a growing movement of Dissent that contested for political power and civil liberties for those engaged in religious life outside of the established Church. All the while, the Victorian elite looked to neighboring France and found in its bloody and chaotic Revolution a disturbing specter of secularization writ large, of a fanatic and wholesale move against ‘the past.’

Thus, Victorian thought was located within a dilemma, between tradition and revolution, between belief and atheism, between social cohesion and anarchy. While the Victorian intellectuals wanted to reject the established orthodoxy of the Anglican Church and the dogmatisms of religion, they did not want to leave England in a cultural and moral vacuum.

In this setting, ancient Greek society and philosophy came to the forefront of the Victorian

HUMANITIES ESSAY

imagination. For a society looking to distance itself from Christian doctrine but reinforce the Christian ethos and morality through human reason rather than revelation, ancient Greece provided a useful alternative, as it seemed to have reached enlightenment in their arts, philosophy, and politics, despite having preceded Christian revelation by centuries. Aiding these efforts were concepts of historiography that measured a civilization's progress not based on its place in time but its perceived location in a developmental cycle whose axis were enlightenment ideals. In the Victorian mind, two contemporaneous societies could be developmentally distant (an idea that fueled the British colonial enterprise against "inferior" societies), while a chronologically distant society such as ancient Greece deserved moral and intellectual empathy. Ancient Greece gave Victorian intellectuals the proof that a secular society need not resort to materialism, reductionism, and divisive individualism and could pursue high ideals and virtues in secular terms.

The problem of secularization was analogous to the challenges facing the profession of medicine in Osler's time, and the Victorian backdrop provides a rich context for understanding Osler's writings. For while medicine became rooted in experimental science and the institution of the university in the turn of the 20th century, it also became prone to the forces of commercialization, scientific reductionism, specialization, and parochialism. Osler's hidden work was to cast a transcendent vision for an increasingly technical profession in an increasingly secular age, combining the language of the Christian faith with the philosophy of ancient Greece to capture the imagination of both believer and unbeliever.

What emerged was a new 'religion of medicine,' whose tenets are scattered across his various essays. Against the erosion of moral and philosophical consensus, Osler prescribes a universal 'gospel' centered on the physical redemption of man that could transcend moral and philosophical disagreement. Against specialization, Osler prescribes a medical education centered on virtues and the emulation of identified 'heroes.' Against the growing institutionalization and bureaucratization of medicine, Osler stresses the importance of

charity and compassion as the foundational orientation for medical practice. Against nationalism and parochialism, Osler prescribes a 'brotherhood' of scientists and physicians that could overcome national or institutional divisions.

Osler's tall hopes for the profession of medicine were to be seriously tempered during the first World War and the death of his son Revere. Indeed, the unprecedented violence of the 21st century would dampen the progressivisms and 'enlightened' optimisms of many others. This does not, however, detract from the nobility of Osler's effort. Medicine in our own time has its share of troubles: incoherent pluralism, fractured ethics, the endless pressures for money and time. It is an age that is crying out for one who could speak in higher words, who could again cast a transcendent view of medicine's place in human history that captures the hearts of physicians of all backgrounds. The challenge to be visionaries and not simply laborers – *that*, perhaps, is Osler's true legacy.

For further reading:

Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*

Joongyu Daniel Song is a medical student at Yale University, currently taking a research gap year before his final year. He began reading philosophy and intellectual history in his spare time as a senior at Princeton University, where he majored in Public Policy and graduated magna cum laude. He gained a love for Sir William Osler from his mentor, Dr. Thomas Duffy, and plans to pursue residency in internal medicine/pediatrics. He presented this essay in part at the AOS Pittsburgh Annual Meeting, May 2018.

American Osler Society Presidential Addresses—First Installment 1971—1979

YEAR/#	CITY	PRESIDENT	TITLE	IF PUBLISHED: CITATION
1971/1	Denver	William Bean	An Uncatalogued Paper Published by William Osler in 1902	In <i>Humanism in Medicine</i> . J McGovern, C Burns editors. Springfield, Ill. Charles C. Thomas, 1973, 113 [Osler pp. 60-62] The uncatalogued paper was published in 1902 in <i>Washington Medical Annals</i> : 158-161, 1902.
1972/2	Montreal	George Harrell	Osler's Practice in Baltimore	<i>Bull Hist of Medicine</i> . Vol 47 (1973) pp. 545 -568 & <i>The Persisting Osler</i> , 1985, pp. 105-123
1973/3	Chicago	Thomas Durrant	I am A Debtor	No data.
1974/4	Philadelphia	John McGovern	Wilburt C. Davison (1892-1972) - Apostle of the Osler Tradition	<i>The Persisting Osler</i> . 1985, pp. 265-276.
1975/5	Bethesda	Edward Rosenow, Jr	?	No data.
1976/6	Baltimore	A. McGehee Harvey	Sir William Osler and the Interurban Clinical Club	<i>The Persisting Osler</i> , 1985. Pp. 285-290.
1977/7	Rochester	Raymond Pruitt	Sir William and Dr. Will	<i>Perspectives in Medicine and Biology</i> . Vol 22 Winter 1979, pp. 273-284. <i>The Persisting Osler</i> , 1985. pp. 229-239
1978/8	Kansas City	Martin Cummings	A Patient's View of Medical Care in Suburbia	No data.
1979/9	San Francisco	Earl Nation	Resident and Chief: The Osler-Camac Correspondence	Published as book 1980 co-authored with J. McGovern. See <i>The Osler Library Newsletter</i> Vol.103, 2005. December 22, 1969 The Influence of Osler on His Students: The Osler-Camac Correspondence Concerning Counsels and Ideals From the Writings of William Osler Earl F. Nation, MD <i>JAMA</i> . 1969; 210(12):2226-2232. doi:10.1001/jama.1969.03160380040009



AOS HISTORY & MEDICAL HUMANITIES

The Ongoing Saga of Compiling the AOS Presidential Addresses

In my first message as AOS President, published in the June Oslerian, the subject of the AOS Presidential Addresses was explored. Dee Canale was quick to point out, correctly, that Mark Silverman, in his 2001 Presidential Address, dressed and impersonated William Harvey, not Harvey Cushing, as I somehow managed to mistakenly claim. My apologies.

Of the first 49 Presidential Addresses (PA), so far I have determined 23 were published in some fashion or another. Ten found a home in *The Persisting Osler*, five in the original edition, and five in *The Persisting Osler II*. Of those, two were re-publications. Two talks were distillations from books published on the same topic. Ken Ludmerer's PA, titled *The Coming of the Second Revolution in Medical Education* came from his book, *A Time to Heal: American Medical Education from the Turn of the Century to the Era of Managed Care*. Earl Nation co-authored a book with J. McGovern. (See *The Osler Library Newsletter* Vol.103, 2005). His presidential address, *Resident and Chief: The Osler-Camac Correspondence*, was an elided version of the 1980 book, *Student Chief, The Osler-Camac Correspondence*. The topic had also been explored in a 1969 JAMA article. An on-going project is to determine the publication fate of the remaining PAs. A table is attached. If you have any knowledge of the fate of the talks listed as "No Data" please let me know. If you are a former AOS President and still have an unpublished manuscript of your talk, please mail a signed copy to me. If you have the working copy from which you lectured, and are willing to part with it, or a copy, please send.

Thanks,
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POETRY CORNER



The Communion of Saints

Herbert T. Brown
who's working the nave
of St. John the Divine
darts from behind
a column and accosts me.

He raises his wrist
to show me the plastic
hospital bracelet
that says who he is
and a discharge summary
that tells what he has –
unfolded so often
it's hanging in parts.

He says yesterday
they sent him home
to die – but date
and diagnosis
are smudged away.
He didn't have the fare.

In the silence of splendor,
I slip him a five.
Maybe his mother *is*
waiting in Nyack.
Sometimes a cigar is just
a cigar.

By Jack Coulehan

OPINION

Thoughts from Across the Pond

Articles expressing opinions on contemporary issues related to the medical humanities, ethics, and practice of medicine will be presented in this section.

As I write, Great Britain is enjoying a remarkable heat wave with the highest temperatures since 1976 and the lowest rainfall

for over 90 years. Despite the uncertainties engendered by the Brexit vote there has been much to enjoy not least of which was the joy and pageantry of the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. The young couple, now known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, both are committed to environmental and other causes, particularly to the mentally and physically disabled. The royal family is far more open now and in the hands of the princes William and Harry, and their spouses, the future bodes well.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the National Health Service. In the austerity of post-war Britain it was launched by the Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, on 5th July 1948 and based on three core principles: that it should meet the needs of everybody, be free at the point of delivery and be based on clinical need, not ability to pay. Of course, it has problems with funding, due to the rise in population, the exponential increase in technology and modern treatments and increasing preventative strategies but it remains universal and in most instances remains free. Understaffing remains a major problem and is likely to worsen if Brexit diminishes the numbers of foreign professionals who come to work and study in Britain. The government have committed to a funding boost of £20 billion over the next five years – whether that is enough and indeed how it will be raised remain unanswered. Such problems are common to all modern economies. To me, it is a moral and ethical requirement to ensure that all members of society have the right and ability to access appropriate healthcare. The concept of universal health coverage has now been taken up globally as one of the main sustainable development goals adopted by all the member states of the United Nations. It is the mark of civilised society that the poorest and weakest receive the basic requirements of life. The Osler Club of London continues to thrive. At long last we have embarked on proper cataloguing of our archives in the Thomas Cotton Room of the Royal College of Physicians. What treasures we have! Our librarian, Richard Osborn, has been sending round copies of recently uncovered articles. One such arrived two days ago. This was the 7th Oslerian Oration (1934) given by John Beattie and entitled, *The True Record of Egerton Yorrick Davis MD*. It delightfully covers Osler's mischievous humour and occasional scatological thoughts.

The year's programme has been a great success and the membership is rising well with more students and young doctors becoming involved. Having a reception before a lecture followed by a fine dinner afterwards undoubtedly facilitates friendships and integrates new attendees. We like to think our patron saint Sir William, who was always generous in his hospitality, would approve. The 80th Oslerian Oration and Banquet took place in the RCP on the

12th July. Our president, the Hon. Sarah Peart (née Osler) took the chair. The Orator was Sir Muir Gray CBE MD, a consultant in public health in Oxford. He has been working with both NHS England and Public Health England with the aim of increasing value for both populations and

individuals and published *How To Get Better Value Healthcare* in 2007. The means of doing this through Systems and Personalisation is now called Population Healthcare and its aim is to maximise value and equity by focusing not on institutions, specialties or technologies, but on populations defined by a common symptom, a condition or by a common characteristic. Recently he has returned to his first public health mission to prevent the changes we assume are due to ageing and disease by getting the right attitude and fighting back against an environment that makes us inactive. His key books include *Sod70!* and with Diana Moran, *Sod Sitting, Get Moving!* The Oration was entitled *The Elixir of Life discovered at Oxford*. Sir Muir pointed out that fortunes have been spent on regenerative medicine and the search for an elixir of life but asked if people really wished to live to 120. His thesis was that the focus is shifting from life expectancy to healthy life expectancy and that we should not think of prevention as merely the prevention of disease, but also the prevention of disability, dementia, frailty and dependency. Ageing by itself appears relatively unimportant until our nineties. For many people loss of fitness begins in their early twenties when they get their first sitting job; a fitness gap opens year after year because of the car, the computer screen and the desk job. The incidence of disease starts increasing at age 40 onwards; some disease is not preventable and we need luck. What has now emerged is that what we have hitherto assumed to be the effects of disease are often the effects of disease and the accelerated loss of fitness that occurs due to the social impact of a diagnosis. Too often when a diagnosis is made the patient and family assume the best thing is to do less. This care concept is wrong if it is loss of fitness rather than the disease itself which is causing problems. The disparity between optimal fitness levels and actual fitness at any age or onset of disease determines functional needs. Sir Muir stated that we need to change beliefs and attitudes, and part of this is the introduction of a National Activity Therapy Service. The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges has launched this revolution with its report,

Exercise the Miracle Cure, subtitled *What Doctors Can Do To Promote It*. This witty, well delivered lecture was much enjoyed by the large audience and the following discussion was animated, before the vote of thanks. The subsequent meal was excellent.

On a personal note, Ruth and I were sorry to miss out on this year's AOS meeting due to some local problems with planning authorities. We have heard from many friends that it was a great success. All being well, we intend to come to Montreal for the meeting marking the centenary

LETTERS –OBITUARIES–NOTICES

of Sir William's death and will probably be accompanied by several OCL members.

By John W. K. Ward

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE ON ASKOSLERIANA DATABASE

Columns in the *Oslerian* in the issues of August 2016 and 2017 outlined the rebuilding and use of the AskOsleriana database hosted by eFileCabinet in Utah and accessed from the AOS homepage (americanosler.org). The ensuing year has seen further advances:

- 1) Notable enhancements include mounting in globally searchable format:
 - a. All programs from prior AOS meetings
 - b. Biographical works:
 - i. Howard—*The Chief: Dr. William Osler—completed*
 - ii. Noble — *The Doctor Who Dared —completed*
 - iii. Reid —*The Great Physician —completed*
 - iv. Wilkinson —*Lions in the Way —completed*
 - v. Pratt — *A Year with Osler —in process*
 - c. Miscellaneous articles
 - d. All issues of *The Oslerian* beginning in 2000
 - e. All issues of *The Osler Library Newsletter* beginning 1969
 - f. *The 70th Birthday Festschrift* in 2 volumes
 - g. Addition of audio files from presentations at prior annual meetings (in process)
 - h. Addition of photos from prior annual meetings (in process)
- 2) We have opened a dialogue with Mary Hague-Yearl, director of the Osler Library at McGill, with a view toward mutual sharing of digitized documents currently in place and going forward.
- 3) We have been developing a computerized database to permanently track and document appropriate permissions from rights holders to use copyrighted material in the Ask Osleriana searchable database OR to document legitimate efforts to locate rights holders if such still exist. Dr. Pete Travers has been the lead in this effort.
- 4) Recent modifications to the user experience in the database include:
 - a. The addition of the ability to search files by title. When we began uploading photos of annual meeting events and audio files of presentations, we realized that the existing text search of the body of the file would no longer apply, since photos and audio files do not contain text. In addition, sometimes one might be searching for an item found in a file title that was not present in the text of the body, such as a PowerPoint.

When using the database, you will find two “radio” buttons below the search box, indicating which type of search you want to undertake. It may often be advisable to do two separate searches to make sure you are finding all relevant instances of the desired search string.

- b. A set of user instructions has been added to the first search page, which will remain accessible during an advanced search. You will recall that the search is a two-stage process, with the first display being that of the raw files turned up. If one of these looks like it may contain information of interest, then that individual file must be selected and searched again (stage two) for the specific “hits” on the search string. Stage two offers more tools for document manipulation as outlined in the instruction set. Since the specific document opens in a separate window, one may tab back to the instructions without losing any information already displayed.

If you have contributions for the database (e.g. scanned articles or photos) or suggestions please contact either Mike Jones (hmikejones40@gmail.com) or Pete Travers (henrytravers@sio.midco.net). We hope you are enjoying using the database for research for presentations, reminiscence, or scholarly publication.

By Mike Jones



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Looking Ahead to Montreal



The 49th meeting of the Society – marking the 100th anniversary of William Osler's death – will be held in Montreal, Quebec from May 12 to 15, 2019. We anticipate a significant level of interest in this meeting and enthusiastically await your arrival. In addition to our usual stimulating papers, there will be special visits to the Osler Library as well as events related to the man and medicine in Montreal in the 1800 and 1900s. Members of the extended Osler family are hoping to attend. The weather here is usually perfect at this time of year and the exchange rate means everything you buy is at a discount! Save the date now!

Call for Abstracts for 2019 Annual Meeting in Montreal, May 12-15, 2019

Abstracts should be sent by e-mail to: aosrenee@gmail.com and must be **received by November 15, 2018**. Abstracts submitted will be acknowledged via e-mail. Only one abstract per person may be submitted.

The abstract should be no longer than one page. It should begin with the complete title, the names of all co-authors, and the corresponding author's mailing address, telephone number, FAX, and e-mail address. This should be followed by a two to three sentence biographical sketch indicating how the author would like to be introduced. The text should provide sufficient information for the Program Committee to determine its merits and possible interest to the membership. The problem should be defined and the conclusions should be stated. Phrases such as "will be presented" should be avoided or kept to a minimum.

Three learning objectives should be given after the abstract. Each learning objective should begin with an active verb indicating what attendees should be able to do after the presentation (for example, "list," "explain," "discuss," "examine," "evaluate," "define," "contrast," or "outline"; avoid noncommittal verbs such as "know," "learn," and "appreciate"). The learning objectives are required for Continuing Medical Education credit.

Each presenter will have a 20-minute time slot, which will be strictly enforced. Presenters should rehearse and time their papers to 15 minutes, in order to permit brief discussions and to be fair to the other speakers. Although 20 minutes might seem quite short for a paper in the humanities, our experience with this format has been overwhelmingly favorable.



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.

We're on the Web!

√ us out at: www.americanosler.org

AOS Members — Please forward to the editor information worth sharing with one another as well as "*Opinions and Letters*". - MHM