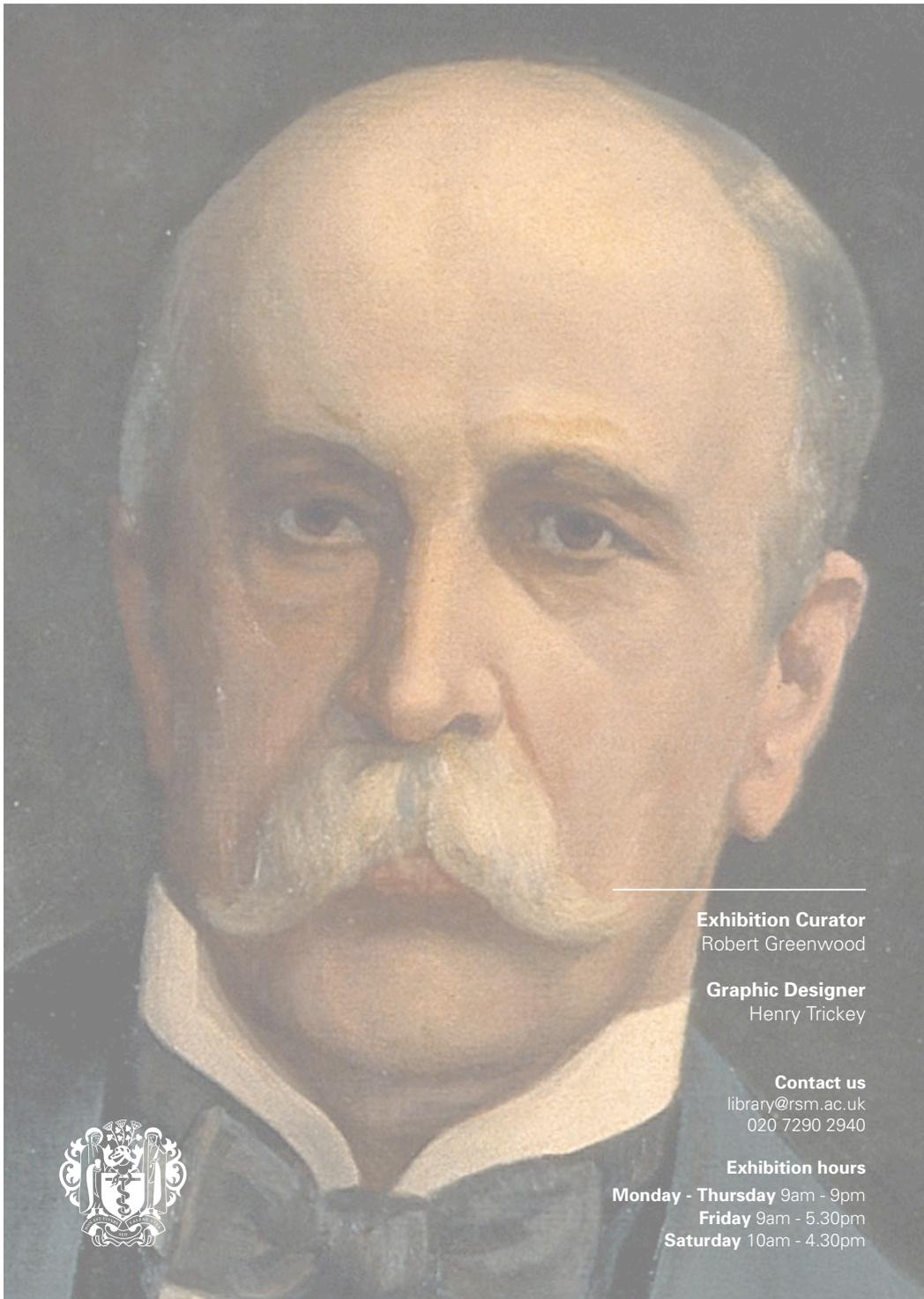


The Royal Society of Medicine

# So joyous and gentle a life

An exhibition in memory of Sir William Osler, 1849 - 1919



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Robert Greenwood

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**Exhibition hours**  
**Monday - Thursday** 9am - 9pm  
**Friday** 9am - 5.30pm  
**Saturday** 10am - 4.30pm



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# Preface



**S**ir William Osler died 100 years ago on 29 December 1919. He was best known for being one of the ‘big four’ founding members of the Johns Hopkins Hospital where he had arrived in 1888 as Physician-in-Chief, establishing the medical residency programme, taking medical students to the bedside, writing major textbooks and for being the ‘King of Pranks’. In addition, Osler’s life later was closely intertwined with that of the new and rapidly progressing Royal Society of Medicine in London (RSM), established in 1907 by the merger of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society and seventeen specialist medical societies. Osler, along with Scottish librarian (later Sir) John MacAlister, was intimately involved with the RSM from the start and actively encouraged postgraduate education and young doctors.

At a meeting of the Section of History of Medicine (later History of Medicine Society) of the Royal Society of Medicine held at the Society’s house, 1 Wimpole Street, on Wednesday 14 January 1920 at 5pm, Sir D’Arcy Power, President of the Section, (who authored more than two hundred biographies in the Dictionary of National Biography, and who later recalled how the section was ‘more like a family than an integral part of a great scientific society’), proposed a vote of sympathy for Lady Osler for the loss of her husband. He recounted the circumstances around which the Section was founded and the part played by William Osler. Lady Osler’s beautifully handwritten note of thanks to the Society has been carefully attached to the Section’s Council minutes book.

As Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, Osler was the key founder of the History of Medicine Section at the RSM in 1912, a desire he had nurtured for more than twenty years previously. This success was despite opposition from Sir Richard Douglas Powell (who had been Physician-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria) who felt the Society had too many sections already. Raymond Crawford, the Dean of King's College London Medical School, and a major contributor to postgraduate medical education, described Osler as a 'magnet' in attracting members. Subsequently, Osler meticulously planned the establishment of the History Section, writing individually to more than 160 potential members. In his later years he considered the Section to be one of his better achievements and his wish was for it to be a common meeting place for 'scholars, students and all those who feel that the study of the history of medicine has a value in education'.

Osler gave great importance to the library, enough to donate a copy of the first edition of William Harvey's *De Motu Cordis*, (a surprisingly small volume which can still be viewed and touched today), and he served on the Library Committee until his death. Paralleling the virtues and activities of MacAlister and Osler, the History of Medicine Society's own archivist, Robert Greenwood (a member of the library staff for the last 35 years), is also the library's Heritage Officer and has been profoundly involved and committed to the library. He has produced a carefully thought out and detailed exhibition on Sir William Osler in commemoration of his life. Among the exhibits are, in addition to Harvey's book, a collection of William Withering's letters. Perhaps we can now solve the mystery of Mother Hutton, said to be the local woman who told Withering of the value of the foxglove in dropsy. How special it must be to handle these, knowing that Osler himself once laid his fingers on them. The same significance that Osler gave to medical history has also been echoed by others. In 1904, Cordell, President of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland, stated that: 'since history is ever repeating itself, it is manifestly the part of wisdom to make it the object of our closest study'. More than one hundred years later, an article in the *British Medical Journal* by a professor of bioethics, also quoted that 'the few truly outstanding physicians are also historians' and without history of medicine, physicians would be 'utterly unable to cope with a changing world because they [would] lack roots in the history of their profession'. These statements are further solidified in Osler's own words: 'Inspiration comes from remembering the past', 'the past is always with us', 'medical history is valuable in problem solving' and 'students need contact with humanities. Maybe then we too can see the future within the context of the past.'

To the generations of doctors after Osler, every single one who has ever experienced bedside teaching should be grateful to Sir William Osler, and this exhibition celebrates 'So joyous and gentle a life'.

A genuine thank you and gratitude goes to the Library of the Royal Society of Medicine and its Heritage Officer, Robert Greenwood. Our appreciation extends to Charles S Bryan, Emeritus Professor of Internal Medicine, University of South Carolina, a world authority on William Osler, for his contributions to the Society.

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**Professor Stephen Challacombe**, *President of the History of Medicine Society (RSM) 2019- 2020*  
**Dr Anjna Harrar**, *immediate past-President of the History of Medicine Society (RSM) 2018- 2019*

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# “Thank you so much, but impossible to accept the nomination”...

...was Sir William Osler's response when in 1914 he refused nomination for the presidency of the Royal Society of Medicine. On 20th May 1914, the Society's secretary, Sir John MacAlister, wrote imploring Osler to reconsider. "You have achieved such honours in your brilliant career that there is practically nothing left that will enhance them; but if you knew the traditions here you would understand what a special honour the election to the presidency of this society in your case means...The society wants a man who is above tradition and who will make precedents for himself, and there is none other who can fulfil that need as you can."

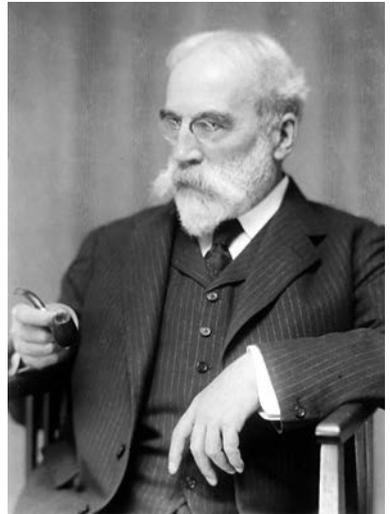
Osler replied: "Awfully sorry I cannot accept the nomination. It is not my job. I need not go into the reasons. It is good of you to think of me. I see your hand in it."

In 1918 Osler again refused the presidency. MacAlister once again wrote to him describing Osler's refusal of 1914 as "an unprecedented snub to the premier medical body of the Kingdom" and asking him "unofficially and confidentially once more whether you will accept nomination, and I say to you quite seriously and solemnly that in the present crisis it is your duty to accept it, for from now on there are great things expected of, and to be done by the Society provided a man of light and leading is at its head, and you are the man to do it!"

Osler replied: "I am more sorry than I can say; as I hate to refuse you anything; but it is impossible. On the previous occasion the snub as you call it, was certainly not meant as such. I regarded the offer as a great honour."

Despite his refusal of the presidency, W.O. had, in the words of his biographer Harvey Cushing, thrown himself "whole-heartedly into the work of this new society; almost invariably dropped in when in town; wrote countless letters to MacAlister and others regarding the library, arranging for speakers, giving dinners for guests before the meetings which he frequently attended; and was active in the movement for the new building at 1 Wimpole Street...He remained a member of the Council for the first three years, was on the Library Committee from that time until his death, and also founded in 1912 a new section, on the History of Medicine." He also served as President of the Clinical Section for the 1911/12 session.

Even before then, Osler had been a great supporter of the amalgamation of 14 of the specialist medical societies with the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society to form, in 1907, the Royal Society of Medicine. In his letter to Osler of 20th May, 1914, quoted above, MacAlister wrote: "I do not know if you have ever realized how much the Amalgamation owed to you. I remember, as vividly as if it were this morning, how at a time when I had practically given up hope, you came into my room at Hanover Square, and I told you of my dreams, and you urged me to 'go right ahead, that the time was ripe, and I was not to worry about the old fogies.' Your encouragement gave me just the stimulant

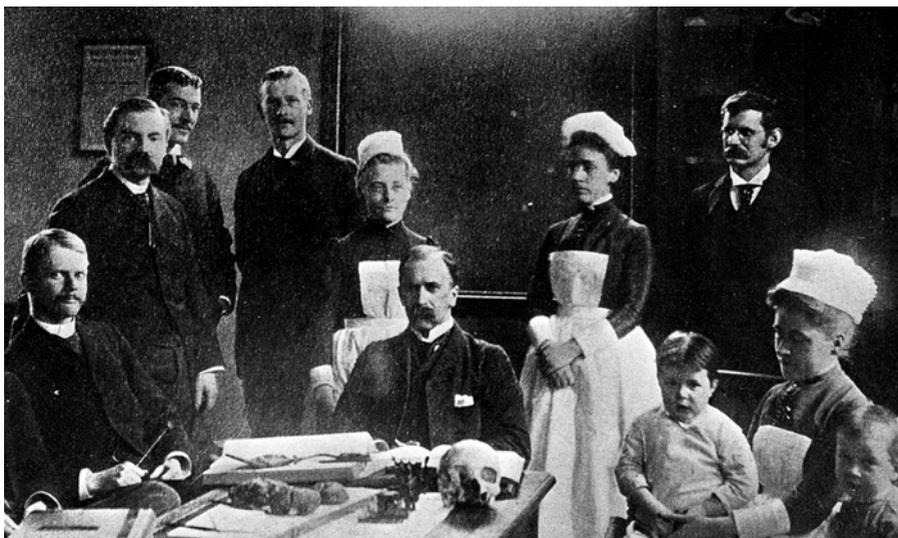


*Sir John MacAlister*

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that I needed at the time – for I was physically as well as mentally ill – and I went ‘right ahead.’” At the first general meeting of Fellows under the new charter held at the Society’s house at 20 Hanover Square on June 14th 1907, Osler stood up to say: “I think, Sir, that what is needed now for this Royal Society of Medicine is money for a new building and for the development of the Library, and I think the profession in this great metropolis can get it. They can get anything they want if they go to their friends, and no profession has such friends as we have. I would ask you to remember that **‘He who asketh much getteth much.’**”

When an appeal for funds to meet the costs of building the Society’s house at No.1 Wimpole Street was launched in 1910, Osler contributed £500.



*Sir William Osler at the Orthopaedic Hospital. Osler is seated in the centre.*

## **Sir William Osler (1849 - 1919)**

Bibliotheca Osleriana: a catalogue of books illustrating the history of medicine and science collected, arranged, and annotated by Sir William Osler, Bt., and bequeathed to McGill University.

Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1929

Heritage Centre Z 675.M4

A bibliography cataloguing Osler’s library of over 7,500 titles.

**“The privilege of browsing in a large and varied library is the best introduction to a general education.”**

“His library was housed mainly in one large room with open shelves reaching to the ceiling and a couple of turntable bookcases, one of them completely filled with editions of his favourite among all books, Sir Thomas Browne’s *Religio Medici*. When he resided at Oxford he was engaged in

cataloguing his library on a novel plan a Bibliotheca prima, etc. After Osler's death this catalogue was completed by Dr. William Francis, and issued at the Clarendon Press, at the charge of Lady Osler, in a fine folio volume. The books themselves were bequeathed by him to the McGill University library, Montreal. So far as I know he kept none of his books under lock and key, although he was well aware of the frailty besetting certain book-collectors and could relate instances within his own experience. In the Preface to his monumental catalogue he gives some anecdotes of his own adventures in pursuit of especially desirable volumes. His book-collecting seemed to be a 'catching complaint,' for I think we may suppose it was started in Harvey Cushing and in others by Osler himself. A well-known bookseller in London used to say that he attributed to Osler's influence no small share in the increased antiquarian interest taken in early printed books on both sides of the Atlantic. Osler was certainly a most intriguing devotee of the fashion."

Sir Charles Sherrington. Osler at Oxford. *British Medical Journal* 1949; 2: 43-45.

## **Sir William Osler (1849 - 1919)**

*Incunabula medica: a study of the earliest printed medical books 1467-1480.*

Oxford, Oxford University Press for the Bibliographical Society, 1923

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363.c.5

[With a preface by A. W. Pollard, and a portrait. The bibliography completed and edited by J. V. Scholderer; with the assistance of Miss J. P. Willcock.]

An "incunable" refers to any book printed before 1501. Incunabulum is the Latin word for a cradle or for swaddling clothes, and can be used to refer to the earliest stages or the first traces in the development of anything, so its application to books refers to the cradle days of printing. In this work Osler describes 217 medical books printed up to 1480.

## **Johannes Mesue (the younger)**

*Opera. Liber de complexionibus, proprietatibus, electionibus...Grabadin Joannis filii mesue...*

*Practica de medicinis particularium aegritudinum...Petri Apponi addition. 1471. [S.I.]*

Librarian's Room 12

The earliest printed book in the RSM library, donated in 1922 by the widow of the late Dr Albert J. Chalmers, a doctor specialising in tropical diseases. The 'Grabadin', or apothecary's manual was the most popular compendium of drugs in medieval Europe, and was used everywhere in their preparation. It was also used in compiling the first London Pharmacopeia. No place of publication is given, but W.O., in his *Incunabula Medica*, posthumously published in 1923, speculates Venice or Florence.



# Founder of the History of Medicine Section

“He was its father, and I doubt if it would ever have come into existence but for his quickening influence; he acted like a magnet in gathering together a company of original members. His faculty of extracting contributions on every conceivable aspect of medicine from the most unproductive sources was invaluable to the Section; and that Osler was in the chair was a sure draw.”

Raymond Crawford, Section President, 1916 – 1918.

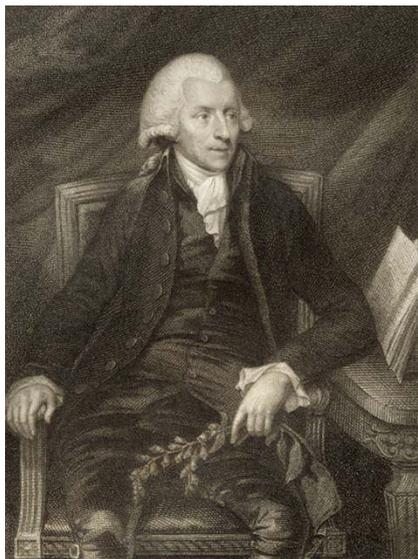
“I have sent out 168 private letters chiefly to Fellows of the Society, and have enclosed with them a postcard addressed to you so that we should get back enough acceptances to give some idea of the number likely to join the new Section.”

William Osler writing to Sir John MacAlister in July 1912.

“In thanking the members of the Section for the honour of election as their first Chairman, Sir William Osler remarked that he had at least two qualifications – a keen interest in the subject, and a certain academic leisure, which would enable him to attend to the duties of the position. Physicians held very different views on the subject of the history of medicine. A majority were indifferent – too busy to pay any attention to it; a considerable number were interested enough to read articles, or to listen to papers; then there were the amateur students, like himself, who dabbled in history as a pastime; and, lastly, there was a select group of real scholars, men like Adams, Greenhill and Payne. It was to be hoped that this Section would form a meeting ground for the scholars, the students, and for all those who felt that the study of the history of medicine had a value in education. He felt sure, from the number of men who had sent in their names, that it would prove to be a useful working section.”

Proceedings of the first meeting of the Section of the History of Medicine held on 20th November 1912, attended by around 160 people, and at which Osler presented his paper on A Down Survey Manuscript of William Petty.

# Donated to the Library of the Royal Society of Medicine by Sir William Osler



*William Withering*

## **William Withering (1741 – 1799)**

[Collection of MS. letters, notes, etc., to or from William Withering M.D., F.R.S., (1741-1799) bound in one volume]. 1766-1804

MSS.534

“Did you know that I made a great haul of Withering’s letters? A man came in one day with a bag & said – are you interested in W? I said ‘rather’ & he pulled out a big bundle of letters & papers & his Edin. Diploma. I offered him £20, at which he nearly expired, as he had hoped for not more than £5. I should have gone to double at auction. I have them all in chron. order & beautifully bound.”

W.O. in a letter to Dr. Joseph Pratt of Boston, August 24th 1918.

In 1775 William Withering, a physician and botanist then practising in Birmingham, identified foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) as the active ingredient in a folk remedy containing nearly two dozen herbs. In his 1785 work *An Account of the Foxglove, and Some of its Medical Uses* he describes the effects of

administering *Digitalis purpurea* to more than 150 patients.

Withering has been described as “one of the greatest medical botanists ... Before his time digitalis was a widely used folk remedy...but it is due to him that correct dosages were established and the action of digitalis in dropsy and on the heart became generally recognised.”

In his will, Sir William Osler bequeathed to the Royal Society of Medicine this collection of William Withering’s letters in the “hope that some member of the Historical Section with (sic) edit them carefully.” This hope was realised in 1928 when Sir William Hale-White, RSM President from 1922 to 1924, catalogued and classified the letters, and transcribed a selection of them. In 1986, Dr Ronald Mann published *William Withering and the Foxglove*, a facsimile edition of the letters.

The collection of letters is held as part of the manuscript collection in the RSM Library. Thirty of the letters were written by Withering, the first dated November 5th 1766 and sent to his parents from Paris. Other letters describe the winters of 1792/3 and 1793/4 which he spent in Portugal in the hope of alleviating the respiratory condition he then suffered. Others include letters to his son, a medical student at Glasgow and at Edinburgh, one describing a hurricane of 1795 which uprooted eight or nine large oak trees. In another letter of 1796 Withering observes that people are taking too much exercise and eating too little to avoid becoming fat, and remarks that Christmas Day was warmer than Midsummer Day. The remainder of the collection consists of letters written to Withering by other botanists and physicians, including Erasmus Darwin.

At a meeting of the History of Medicine Section held on 17th March 1915, following a paper on Withering read by A.R. Cushny, M.D., Osler commented that Withering had discovered the secret of the use of digitalis, and the indications which he relied upon for its employment did not differ

much from those enumerated in the present day. The treatment of Withering himself – namely by protection from exposure to cold and residence in a temperate climate during the winter – was not inappropriate for a patient in the third stage of pulmonary tuberculosis.  
The first printed documents relating to modern surgical anaesthesia.  
Remarks made on presenting Morton's original papers to the Royal Society of Medicine, May 15th, 1918.

**Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine 1917/18 Vol.11 (3): 65-69.**

“Morton's original essays are among the rarissima, not existing, so far as I can ascertain, in any of the general or special libraries of this country. I have been looking for them in vain for many years. In a parcel of his father's papers recently received from William J. Morton, of New York, there were duplicates of ‘Letheon,’ and ‘On the Mode of Administration of Sulphuric Ether,’ which I have great pleasure in presenting to the Library.”

“Before Oct. 16, 1846, surgical anaesthesia did not exist; within a few months it became a world-wide procedure; and the full credit for its introduction must be given to William Thomas Green Morton, who, on the date mentioned, demonstrated at the Massachusetts General Hospital the simplicity and safety of ether anaesthesia.” - William Osler

**Henry Jacob Bigelow (1818 – 1890)**

Insensibility during surgical operations produced by inhalation. [Boston], 1846.

L.9.c.16 Box 59A L-Sequence

“...a duplicate copy of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal of November 18, 1846, which contains the first printed account of the new procedure, by Dr. Henry J. Bigelow.”

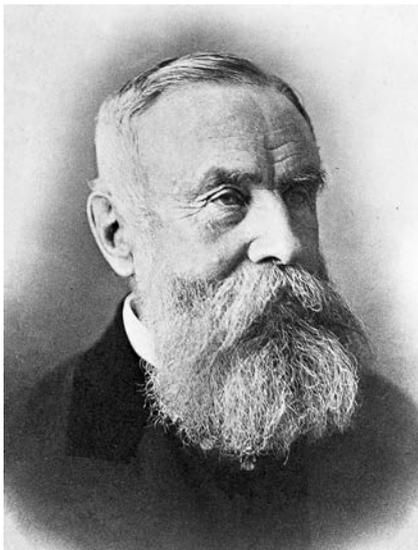
**William Thomas Green Morton (1819 – 1868)**

Circular : Morton's letheon.

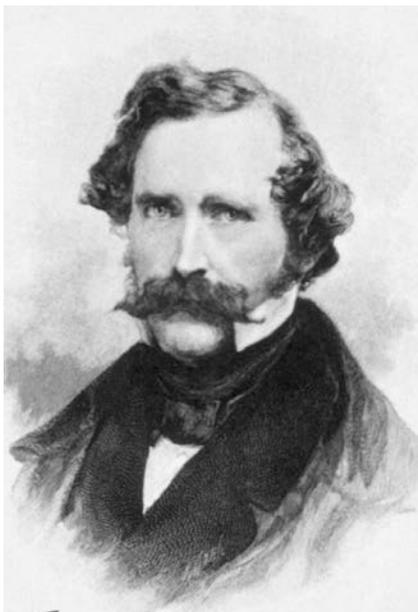
5th edition. Boston, 1847.

L.9.c.17. Box 59A L-Sequence

“The medium through which Dr. Morton communicated the results of experiments on etherisation to the public, was a ‘circular’ which he had printed, at his own expense, almost every week. It was at first, as its name imports, a mere letter of advice; but, as it became the receptacle of newspaper articles, and correspondence from every portion of the Union, announcing the success of etherisation, it was necessarily enlarged into a large and closely-printed sheet of four pages. Soon this ‘circular’ became a pamphlet, and of this five different editions were published, under Dr. Morton's immediate supervision, embodying a digest of all the authentic information, both from Europe and America, on ‘Anaesthesia.’”



*Henry Jacob Bigelow*



*William Thomas Green Morton*

## William Thomas Green Morton (1819 – 1868)

Remarks on the proper mode of administering sulphuric ether by inhalation.  
Boston : Dutton and Wentworth, 1847.

L.9.c.18

Box 59A L-Sequence

“In 1847 Morton published a 44-page pamphlet on ‘The Proper Mode of Administering Sulphuric Ether by Inhalation’ in which the original apparatus (now a treasured relic at the Massachusetts General Hospital), is described. In the early part of April he found that a sponge would serve the same purpose, and was less dangerous. The greater part of the pamphlet is taken up with general directions, the outcome of the author’s experience.”

## Eucharius Roesslin

Der Swangernfrawen und Hebamme Rosegarte. [s.l.]

At end of preface: Cöln 1512.

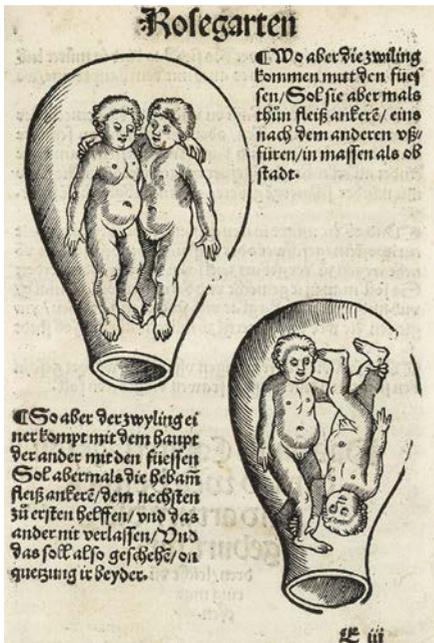
At end of dedication: Würms 1513.

Library Safe (L.6.B.14)

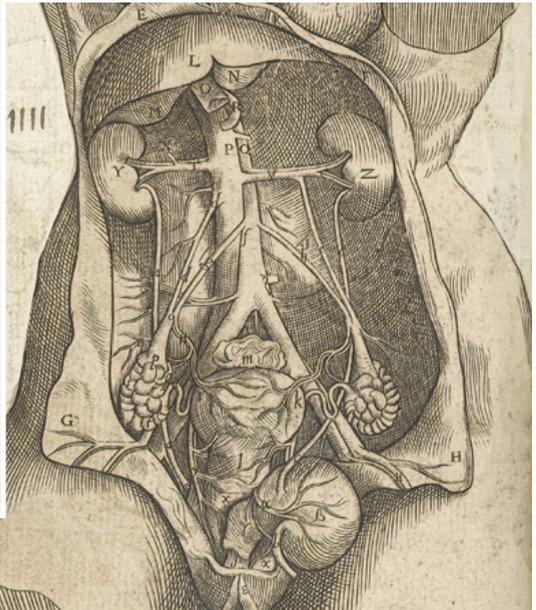
The earliest printed textbook for midwives.

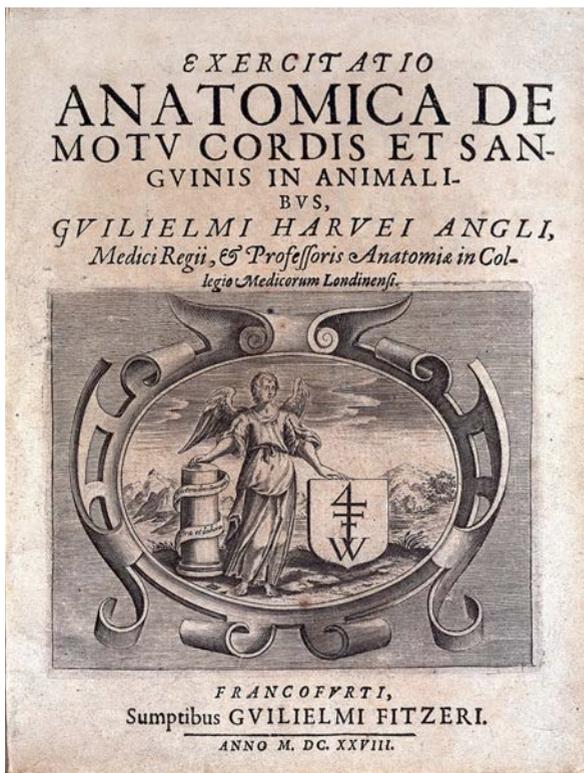
At the inaugural meeting of the History of Medicine Section held on 20th November 1912, W.O. urged members of the Section “to take a special interest in the Library of the Society.

Though large, and rapidly growing, there were many lacunae, particularly in the choice editions of the works of the great masters of the profession, and he would suggest that by special subscriptions among the members and Fellows, as occasion offered, such books should be bought.” This book was purchased in 1916 for 11 guineas by Sir William Osler, Dr Norman Moore, Dr M. Handfield-Jones, Dr Herbert Spencer, Dr Armand Routh, Dr H. Williamson, Dr Walter Tate and Dr Charles Singer, and donated to the RSM Library.



Illustrations from *Der Swangernfrawen und Hebamme Rosegarte* depicting babies in the womb and the female torso.





## William Harvey (1578 – 1657)

Exercitatio anatomica de motu cordis et sanguinis in animalibus. Francofurti : Sumptibus Guilielmi Fitzeri, 1628.

Library Safe

“Sir W. Osler presented to the Library the first edition of Wm. Harvey’s ‘De motu cordis’ dated 1628. The best thanks of the Library Committee were accorded to Sir Wm. Osler for his rare and valuable gift.” The minutes of the Library Committee meeting held on July 4th, 1917.

**“A modest little monograph of seventy-two pages, from which we may date the beginning of experimental medicine.”**

“De Motu Cordis marks the break of the modern spirit with the old traditions. No longer were men to rest content with

careful observation and with accurate description; no longer were men to be content with finely-spun theories and dreams, which ‘serve as a common subterfuge of ignorance’; but here for the first time a great physiological problem was approached from the experimental side by a man with a modern scientific mind, who could weigh evidence and not go beyond it, and who had the sense to let the conclusions emerge naturally but firmly from the observations. To the age of the hearer, in which men had heard, and heard only, had succeeded the age of the eye, in which men had seen and had been content only to see. But at last came the age of the hand – the thinking, devising, planning hand; the hand as an instrument of the mind, now reintroduced into the world in a modest little monograph of seventy-two pages, from which we may date the beginning of experimental medicine.”

The Growth of Truth as Illustrated in the Discovery of the Circulation of the Blood. The Harveian Oration delivered at the Royal College of Physicians, London, 18th October 1906.

## Medico-Botanical Society of London

The original unpublished manuscript Minute Books from its commencement in 1821 to its conclusion in 1852. General Meetings 1821-52, 6 vols; Council Meetings, 1828-49, 3 vols.

Purchased at auction and donated to the Library of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1917 by Sir William Osler.

# Osler's mentors

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"His library was housed mainly in one large room with open shelves reaching to the ceiling and a couple of turntable bookcases, one of them completely filled with editions of his favourite among all books, Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*."

Sir Charles Sherrington. *Osler at Oxford*. *British Medical Journal* 1949; 2: 43-45.



*Sir Thomas Browne*



*Religio Medici*

## Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682)

*Religio Medici*.

Lugd. Batavorum : Apud Franciscum Hackium., 1650. L.9.a.4

*Religio medici*.

6th edition, corrected and amended with annotations never before published, upon all the obscure passages therein.

London, Printed by Ja. Cotterel, for Andrew Crook, 1669. L.9.a.2

## Sir William Osler (1849 - 1919)

*Religio Medici*. An address delivered at Guy's Hospital, October, 1905.

Reprinted from *The Library*, January, 1906. London: The Chiswick Press, 1906. Octavo Tract 4145. T. Browne

**“Full of counsels of perfection which appeal to the mind of youth, still plastic and unhardened by contact with the world.”**

“*Religio medici* is a tour de force, an attempt to combine daring scepticism with humble faith in the Christian religion...For the student of medicine the writings of Sir Thomas Browne have a very positive value. The charm of high thoughts clad in beautiful language may win some readers to a love of good literature; but beyond this is a still greater advantage. The *Religio* is full of counsels of perfection which appeal to the mind of youth, still plastic and unhardened by contact with the world. Carefully studied, from such books come subtle influences which give stability to character and help to give a man a sane outlook on the complex problems of life. Sealed early of this tribe of authors, a student takes with him, as *compagnons de voyage*, lifelong friends whose thoughts become his thoughts and whose ways become his ways. Mastery of self, conscientious devotion to duty, deep human interest in human beings - these best of all lessons you must learn now or never: and

these are some of the lessons which may be gleaned from the life and from the writings of Sir Thomas Browne.” An address delivered at the Physical Society, Guy's Hospital, London, 12th October 1905.

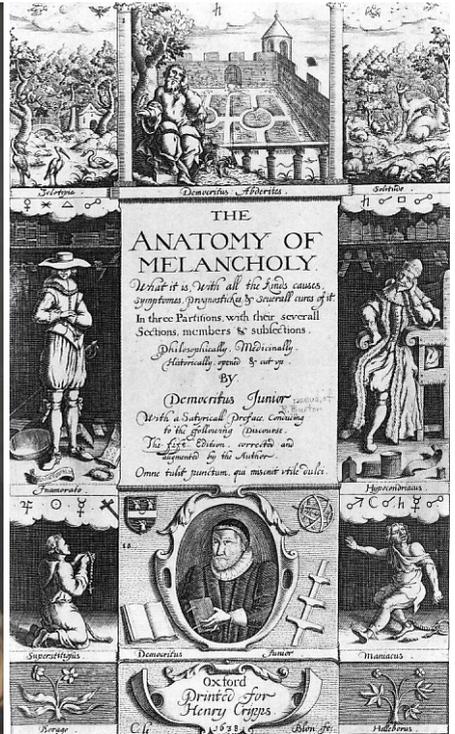
## John Brown (1810 – 1882)

*Horae subsecivae*. Edinburgh : Edmonston and Douglas, 1858. A.2.c.27 – 28

“His room-mate Arthur Browne, a lover of English literature, who was to become Professor of Obstetrics at McGill. He introduced Osler to the works of Lamb and Coleridge, and gave him a copy of John Brown's *Horae Subsecivae*, Locke and Sydenham with other *Occasional Papers* (Edinburgh, 1858) which made a lasting impression on Osler, and from which dates his interest in Locke and Sydenham.” [*Horae subsecivae* = “leisure hours”]

Leonard Payne. *Osler as a Bibliophile*. In: *Osler Club of London. Oslerian anniversary, incorporating the Fitzpatrick lecture for 1975 : the record of the 300th meeting of the Osler Club of London held jointly with the Royal College of Physicians of London*.

[s.l. : s.n.] ; printed for the Osler Club of London, 1976.92 (OSL)



Robert Burton and his book, *The anatomy of melancholy*

## Robert Burton (1577 – 1640)

*The anatomy of melancholy*. : What it is, with all the kinds causes, symptomes, prognostickes, & severall cures of it, in three partitions ... philosophically, medicinally, historically, opened & cut up. / By Democritus Junior [pseud.]

The 7th ed., corr. and augm. by the author ...

London : For John Garvey, [1660]

M.2.g.9

One of W.O.'s favourite books, Burton was inspired to write it following his own bouts of depression. The first psychiatric encyclopaedia and a literary tour de force, Burton cites over 500 authors.

“No book of any language presents such a stage of moving pictures...The lovers, old and young; the fools who were accounted wise, and the wise who were really fools; the madmen of all history, to anatomize whom is the special object of the book; the world itself, against which he brings a railing accusation – the motley procession of humanity sweeps before us on his stage, a fantastic but fascinating medley at which he does not know whether to weep or to laugh.”

W.O. speaking on April 22nd, 1913 as special guest of the Elizabethan Club, Yale University. The American author, critic and scholar William Lyon Phelps described how “We gave him a dinner and afterwards at the Elizabethan Club he spoke most brilliantly on Burton's ‘Anatomy of Melancholy.’ After he had talked nearly an hour he asked how long he should go on, and I replied that we could sit as long as he could stand.”

W.O. recommends Dr Louis Henri Vaquez (1860-1936, pictured below) for Fellowship of the Royal Society of Medicine.

“Vaquez who comes up for election is a first class man, well known to me personally and in every way worthy to be elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine.”

## Sir William Osler (1849 - 1919)

A clinical lecture on erythraemia (polycythaemia with cyanosis, *maladie de Vaquez*)

Lancet 1908; 1: 143-146.

“In 1892 Vaquez, a Paris physician, well known for his researches on the pathology of the blood, described a condition of hyperglobulism with cyanosis, which he believed to be due to an over-activity of the blood-forming organs...In France it has been called *maladie de Vaquez*, or *Vaquez-Osler*, and in the United States some of my friends have been kind enough to associate my name with it. But the priority of description rests with Vaquez and if a name is to be associated with the disease it should be that of our distinguished French colleague.”



*Dr Louis Henri Vaquez, who diagnosed 'maladie de Vaquez', more commonly known as Polycythemia.*

## Sir John Young Walker MacAlister (1856-1925)

The Osler medical library (a tribute). July 12th, 1919. London 362.b.9

A tribute by Sir John Young Walker MacAlister, Resident Librarian at the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society (the forerunner to the RSM), later its Secretary and consulting Librarian, to his close friend Sir William Osler. MacAlister was the prime mover of the campaign to amalgamate 14 of the specialist medical societies with the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society to form, in 1907, the Royal Society of Medicine.

## Charles Hewitt

A small item of Osleriana from the Society's archive is this testimonial written by Sir William Osler in 1909 at the request of Charles Hewitt, appointed the Society's Librarian in 1907. Hewitt, however, despite W.O.'s glowing reference, remained with the RSM until 1919 when he left to take up a post with the League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva. W.O.'s recommendation was not the last kindness he showed to Mr. Hewitt. The minutes of the Library Committee meeting held on July 4th, 1911, record that “on the motion of Sir William Osler, it was resolved to recommend to the Council that Mr. Hewitt's salary be increased by £50 per annum.” Among Mr Hewitt's many achievements was that of overseeing the transfer in 1910 of the Society's Library from its home in Hanover Square to temporary premises at Cavendish Square and from thence, two years later, to its permanent home at 1 Wimpole Street.

## “The best English work on medicine of its time”

Morton's Medical bibliography: an annotated check-list of texts illustrating the history of medicine (Garrison and Morton). Edited by Jeremy M. Norman. 5th edition. Aldershot, Scolar, 1991

## Sir William Osler (1849 - 1919)

The principles and practice of medicine : designed for the use of practitioners and students of medicine. Edinburgh ; London : Young J. Pentland, 1892. Heritage Centre (OSL)

“On several occasions, in Philadelphia, I was asked by Lea Bros. to prepare a work on Diagnosis and had half promised one; indeed I had prepared a couple of chapters, but continually procrastinated on the plea that up to the 40th year a man was fit for better things than text-books...Dr. Granger, Messrs. Appleton's agent, came from N.Y. to ask me to prepare a Text-book on Medicine. We haggled for a few weeks about terms and finally, selling my brains to the Devil, I signed the contract...Three mornings of each week I stayed at home and dictated from 8 a.m. till 1 p.m. On the alternate days I dictated after the morning hospital visit, beginning about 11.30. The spare hours of the afternoons were devoted to correction and reference work...During the writing of the work I lost only one afternoon through transient indisposition and never a night's rest. Between September 1890 and January 1892 I gained nearly 8 lbs. in weight.”

W.O. The Writing of a Textbook. In: Bibliotheca Osleriana.

## Osler's nodes, Sir William Osler (1849 - 1919)

Chronic infectious endocarditis.

Quarterly Journal of Medicine, 1908/9; 2: 219-30. 949d

The tender subcutaneous nodes in subacute bacterial endocarditis were first observed by Osler in 1888 and reported in 1909. This paper is the first definite clinical description of subacute bacterial endocarditis.



*The playful side of Sir William Osler*

## Egerton Yorrick Davis

The mischievous side of Osler was represented by his occasional alter ego Egerton Yorrick Davis. Typical was a letter he wrote under that name, and which was published in the *Medical News* (Philadelphia) in 1884. Osler was an editor of this journal and, in response to an editorial on vaginismus written by his colleague Theophilus Parvín, a reputedly pompous and priggish obstetrician, as Egerton Y. Davis, Ex. U.S. Army, Caughnawauga, Quebec, he wrote describing a fictitious case of "De cohesion in coitu." "Davis's" letter is here reprinted in the *Medical Times (New York)* 1945; 73: 52-4.

Osler also submitted a review to the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* of *A System of Practical Medicine* by American authors, edited by William Pepper, and published in 5 volumes in 1885-1886. The review appeared anonymously but the original manuscript submitted to the journal was signed "E.Y.D." The reviewer is especially critical of the chapter on "Diseases of Substance of the Heart," saying "We scarcely see why, except to follow customary usage, fibroid heart should be considered as a myocarditis," and points out an "extraordinary mistake" in the chapter on "Diseases of the Blood and Blood Glandular System" whereby "the number of white corpuscles per cubic millimetre...is stated to be from 'eight to fifteen millions!'"

Both of these chapters were written by Osler. His friends were reported to be "indignant and endeavoured to discover who the reviewer was."

Egerton Yorrick Davis came to inspire other authors and correspondents who ensured his publication until at least 1971 when his letter, from Osler's birthplace, Bond Head, Ontario, to the *New England of Medicine* on "Posterior Thump-version" led the editor to append a note in celebration of the fact that "in spite of his hoary age, E.Y. Davis still displays the innovative spirit."

### **Sir William Osler (1849 - 1919)**

The evolution of modern medicine : a series of lectures delivered at Yale university on the Silliman foundation, in April, 1913 by Sir William Osler, bart.

New Haven : Yale University Press ; [etc., etc.], 1921.

61(09) OSL

This book is based on the Silliman Lectures given by W.O. at Yale in 1913. The subjects covered are Greek medicine, mediaeval medicine, the renaissance and the rise of anatomy and physiology, the rise and development of modern medicine, and the rise of preventive medicine. Osler requested in his will that this and other unfinished works should not be published but it was, nevertheless, prepared for the press by his biographer, the neurosurgeon and pathologist, Harvey Cushing.

"It is one of the most interesting short histories of medicine, written in Osler's usual charming style, and is still one of the best books with which to commence the study of medical history."

Morton's Medical bibliography: an annotated check-list of texts illustrating the history of medicine (Garrison and Morton). Edited by Jeremy M. Norman. 5th edition. Aldershot, Scolar, 1991

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.

New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1919.

On Friday July 11th, 1919, at the RSM Library, in front of a distinguished company which included the President of the General Medical Council, the Director-General of the Army Medical Service, and the High Commissioner for Canada, an anniversary book of two large octavo volumes, written by his pupils, friends, and colleagues was presented to W.O. on the eve of his 70th birthday. Making the presentation, Sir Clifford Allbutt delivered the following tribute:

"In these volumes we hope you will find the kind of offering from your fellow-workers which will please you best; immaterial offerings indeed, but such as may outlive a more material gift. As to you we owe much of the inspiration of these essays, and as in many of their subjects you have taken a bountiful part, so by them we desire to give you some form to our common interests and affections. We pray that health and strength may long be spared to you and to her who is the partner of your life; and that for many years to come you will abide in your place as a Nestor of modern Oxford, as a leader in the van of Medicine, and as an example to us all."

### **Sir William Osler; memorial number: appreciations and reminiscences.**

Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums and Journal of Technical Methods. 1926; No.9.

"Fifteen hundred copies of this Sir William Osler Memorial Volume of the International Association of Medical Museums, privately issued in April, 1926, have been numbered for the subscribers. This is copy No. 36."

### **Arnold Meadowcraft Muirhead (1900-1988)**

Grace Revere Osler : a brief memoir.

[Oxford] : Printed for private circulation at the Oxford University Press, 1931.

92(OSL)

Grace Linzee Revere, the great-granddaughter of Paul Revere, the famous patriot of the American Revolution, was born in Boston in 1854. Grace refused to marry Osler until he had finished writing his textbook on the principles and practice of medicine. Upon its completion, he presented the book to her and said: "There, take the darn thing; now what are you going to do with the man?"

On May 7th, 1892 Grace and W.O. were married in Philadelphia. Following a honeymoon tour of Europe, Mr and Mrs Osler set up house in Baltimore. In 1893, a son, named Paul Revere Osler, was born and died in that same year. Their second son, Edward Revere Osler, was born in Baltimore on December 28, 1895.

The Oslers moved to Oxford in 1905 when W.O. took up the position of Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University. Once settled in their new home at 13 Norham Gardens, they played host to

a stream of visitors and the house came to be known to their friends as “The Open Arms.” At the coronation of King George VI in June 1911, a Baronetcy was conferred on Osler in recognition of his many contributions to the field of medicine, and thereafter Grace was known as Lady Osler. During World War One, Lady Osler was active in war efforts such as the shelter and support of Belgian refugees in England. In August 1917, aged just 21, their son Revere died of shrapnel wounds sustained at Passchendaele. Osler wrote to John MacAlister: “Hard blow to-day. News of the death of my boy in France. He was a great lover of books and a son after my own heart.” In his journal, W.O. wrote: “Poor Grace! it hits her hard; but we are both going to be brave & take up what is left of life as though he were with us.”

Sir William Osler died on 29th December 1919 at his home in Oxford.

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**“ When he came to die, Osler was, in a very real sense, the greatest physician of our time...**

...Good looks, distinction, blithe, benignant manners, a sunbright personality, radiant with kind feeling and good will towards his fellow men, an Apollonian poise, swiftness and surety of thought and speech, every gift of the gods was his; and to these were added careful training, unsurpassed clinical ability, the widest knowledge of his subject, the deepest interest in everything human, and a serene hold upon his fellows that was as a seal set upon them.

**”**

*- Fielding Hudson Garrison*



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