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LIFE OF SIR WILLIAM OSLER.

MASTER OF MEDICINE; LOVER OF BOOKS;
YOUNG MAN'S FRIEND.
FASCINATING AND BENEFICENT CAREER.

By W. SCOTT KING.

If vital and abiding worth is taken into account (to say nothing of literary fascination and medical instruction), and not mere passing interest, then the most important event for many of us of this golden month of June has been the publication of the eagerly-awaited biography of Sir Wm. Osler, the great doctor. It is in two rather over-portly volumes of close upon 700 pages each, and is issued by the Oxford University Press at the price of 37s. 6d. net. Both size and price will, I fear, tell somewhat against the universally wide circulation which it ought to attain, and from that point of view, though that only, I could wish that they could have been somewhat less, particularly the price, because it is one of the most important and inspiring biographies published in this country and America for thirty years, and every intelligent man and woman who is concerned for the conquest of typhoid, pneumonia, and tuberculosis, and the perfecting of sanitation and public health, and who also takes pleasure in being brought into contact with a brilliant, lovable, and princely-endowed personality, ought to read it.

Not a Final Portrait.

Dr. Harvey Cushing, who has written it, rightly says that "it is merely the outlines for the painting of the final portrait," and the ultimate estimate of Osler's rare and manifold achievements, and very largely he has been content to trace his career and reveal the wonderful doctor by means of his letters and publications. But what an amazing and thrilling quarry it is, to be sure! Far into these hot June nights I have balanced these two volumes on my knees and lived a charmed life, sharing the gaiety, friendships, thoughts, battles, and world-wide triumphs and honours of the greatest personal figure in the medical world of our time. Well may Dr. Saleeby call him the "master physician of his age; the wonderful Osler, who taught medicine as no man has ever taught it before," and say that this rich and spacious life-record "Makes me feel mean and idle and trivial."

How to give any adequate and satisfying account of these pages I do not know—one would wish for all the space of a week's issue of this paper to let admiration and love have free play for endless quotations concerning Osler's accomplishments, friendships, leading literary, moral, and religious ideas, and his love for children and country and humanity. I have turned the corners down—a good habit if the book is your own, as is my good fortune in this case—of over 200 pages, and pencil-marked more than 700 passages, and it has occupied several oblivious hours merely to retrace one's steps and reread only these. Perhaps I cannot do better than quote a few estimates of him by famous people and medical journals, in which these volumes are so rich, for when he left his native Canada for America, and America to come to our Oxford, and, of course, when he died in 1919 pulpit and Press, journal and magazine, friends and nurses and specialists, military men and statesmen, and uncounted hosts of patients whom he had made for ever his debtors, vied with each other in loving admiration, reminiscence, and praise.

Praise by the Great Ones.

Of course, there are shining names, like King Edward's, Kipling's, Walt Whitman's, Prof. Wm. James's, Oliver Wendell Holmes's, John Morley's, Bryce's, Dr. Weir Mitchell's, but take these—Dr. Cushing calls him "one of the most greatly beloved physicians of all time." At his great funeral these words were uttered—"He advanced the science of medicine, he enriched literature, and the humanities; yet individually he had a greater power. He became the friend of all he met—he knew the workings of the human heart metaphorically as well as physically. He joyed with the joys and wept with the sorrows of the humblest of those who were proud to be his pupils. He stooped to lift them up to the place of his royal friendship, and the magic touchstone of his generous personality helped many a desponder on the rugged paths of life. He achieved many honours and many dignities, but the proudest of all was his unwritten title, 'the Young Man's Friend.'" Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher wrote: "Old and young alike acknowledged his mastery, and never left his presence without feeling the magnetism of the man and that insatiable, but unobtrusive, appetite for helpfulness which made him the prince of friends and benefactors." Lady Astor writes: "I only saw him cross once—a young M.O. said before a patient that his case was hopeless and that annoyed the Chief. That was the wonderful part about him, he really brought healing and health, life not death, with him. . . . My children adored him. . . . I cannot think of him without feeling that all one can give in this brief passage is never really enough. He made us all want to give more." Let this suffice.

William Osler was born in 1849 in Upper Canada, and was a son of the manse, and for a time intended to enter the Church himself. His singularly for-

tunate though crowded life—his master word was "work"—divides itself into four periods—Toronto and Montreal, Philadelphia and Baltimore, then 14 years as Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, and the Great War, during which came his one supreme sorrow, the loss of his only child, Revere, killed in battle, and where he got the sublime nickname, "Consoler-General to the British Army." Of the technical side of his life, of which, naturally, there is so much in these volumes, I can say nothing, though every medical man in England, America, Canada, France, and Germany will adopt them as life friends to be consulted. But three points must be emphasised. His *magnum opus* was "The Principles and Practice of Medicine," which is everywhere the standard work to which he devoted his life, re-issuing it every few years brought up to date. Secondly, he was a great clinician, and as the dedication reminds us, insisted on the supreme importance of studying diseases with students at the bedsides of their patients. Thirdly, he fought with pen and voice and fifty years of drudging experiment against typhoid, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and syphilis and cancer, humanity's five chief foes.

The Man Himself.

But one of the chief delights of these volumes for the untechnical layman lies in the revelation of the man himself, first in his innumerable professional, social, and domestic friendships, and secondly in the accounts of his passionate love of books and ardour in collecting them. No medical man who ever lived had, probably, so wide a knowledge of ancient and modern literature—biography, poetry, travel, belles lettres, or could quote so freely, drawing from every field. His own library was priceless in first and old editions, and he was almost as much sought after by bibliographical clubs and magazines and societies as by colleges and medical schools and hospitals. Professor Wm. James, the great literary psychologist, Walt Whitman, Rudyard Kipling, Lord Balfour, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and a host of other famous literary men and writers in many fields, were his friends, and these volumes fascinatingly record their correspondence. But the master of his life was the Norwich physician, Sir Thomas Browne, to whom there are scores of references here and to his *Religio Medici* and *Urn Burial*. Indeed, as his coffin lay in the Lady Chapel at Oxford there was placed on it, with a single sheaf of lilies, his favourite copy of the "Religio." Osler hunted for rare editions all over the world, as he hunted for bacilli, and this book is alone worth reading for its information in the library sense. But he was the great living authority, none the less, on the history of his own profession and of medical treatment and discovery. Nothing shines out more clearly, either, than his generosity of admiration for the great medical discoverers of his age, all of whom he knew and eulogised—Virchow, Knoch, Lister and others.

Again, Osler was an incessant traveller. When a professor in Canada and America, he came over here almost each year, and was more familiar with the bookshops and health-resorts of England and Scotland and Wales than most of us. When he came to live here, he as frequently recrossed the Atlantic; in fact, it used to be said in Oxford that he went to America for his week-ends.

Profoundly Religious.

But it is time I devoted my remaining space to giving peeps into Dr. Osler's mind, where his beliefs, ideals, and tenderesses resided. It was truly said that beyond everything else Osler was a preacher, a great lay preacher. He knew the Bible almost off by heart, but apart from his actual bracing messages he ever gave his students and audiences, he had a profoundly religious and philosophic mind. He thought on life, and the ways of men, and one could find in these volumes passages from Osler's letters and lectures enough to furnish one with fifty Sunday morning and week-evening discourses. Let him instance: He created a great sensation years ago, it will be recalled, by his famous address on life's effective work being over at 40, which gave the headline in American papers, "Osler Recommends Chloroform at 60." Here is the whole passage, and this is a sentence from it—"The effective, moving, vitalising work of the world is done between the ages of 25 and 40—those 15 golden years." Or, as he further said: "All the great advances have come from men under 40, so the history of the world shows that a large proportion of the evils may be traced to Septuagenarians—nearly all the great political mistakes, all the worst poems, most of the bad pictures, a majority of the bad novels, not a few of the worst sermons and speeches." He was essentially a man of faith. In a paper in the "British Medical Journal" he wrote: "Nothing in life is more wonderful than faith, the one great moving force which we can neither weigh in the balance nor test in the crucible. Creeds pass, but an inexhaustible supply of faith remains. Christendom lives on it, and countless thousands are happy in that most

touching of all confessions. 'Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.' He was one of the most successful, though unconscious psycho-therapists, though no faith-healer or psycho-analyst. They said in the wards that Osler's treatment "consists of a mixture of hope and nux vomica."

Another quotation from an address is "Change that hard saying, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof' into 'the goodness thereof,' since the chief worries of life arise from the foolish habit of looking before and after . . . The day of a man's salvation is now—the life of the present, of to-day, lived earnestly, intently, without a forward-looking thought. . . . Begin the day with Christ and His prayer—you need no other. Creedless, with you have a religion; creed-stuffed, it will leave you theological dough in which you stick." In a valedictory to the U.S.A. medical profession on "Unity, Peace, and Concord" we read, "Before peace can be attained, the physician, like the Christian, must overcome the three great foes—ignorance, which is an apathy, which is the world, and vice, which is the devil." In an address at Norwich at the unveiling of a statue to Sir Thomas Browne, Osler said there were three lessons his life taught, first that he had an ideal education, second, he presents a remarkable example of a man who mingled the water of science with the oil of faith, and third that the perfect may be lived in a very simple and quiet way. On addressing a Nurses' Training School, he said: "Happy lives shall be yours, because busy and useful having been initiated into two of the three mysteries of the Great Secret—the happiness that is in the absorption in some vocation which satisfies soul; that we are here to add what we can to, not get what we can from, life; and the third—is the mystery which you may or may not learn hereafter. Again, speaking of Faith, he said: "It will not save the dead, it will not put in a new eye in place of a bad one, nor will it cure cancer or pneumonia; spite of these nineteenth-century restrictions, faith, a most precious commodity, without which we should be very badly off." Dr. Osler was always fortunate in fact a good title for these volumes would be "Fortunate Life," and in nothing was he more than in his choice of a wife. Of her he wrote, an engagement, "She is an old friend of mine—I very safe."

I have no space to speak of his sense of humour upon which he laid such emphasis as a first-class ingredient in a life's philosophy, and also of his light in children and in romping with them. I have the two things he disliked most were unpopularity and garrulousness—literally, as our modern phrase has it, he had no time for them. In a well dinner speech at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, he said: "I have three personal ideals. One, to do the day's work well and not to bother about to-morrow. Second, to act the golden rule as far as in me lay, to my professional brethren, and to the patients committed to my care. Third, to cultivate a measure of equanimity as would enable me to bear success with humility, the affections of my friends without pride, and to be ready when the day of sorrow and grief may come to meet it with the courage befitting a man."

Immortality.

Of Osler's great lecture on "Immortality" I need say nothing, as it is too well known, but at the end of it he threw in his own lot with those who believe in life after death. But it is time for me to end, and yet how much more could be said. His wonderful work for England when her hour of need came, and how he laboured to bring America to our side, of his life-effort to put the medical profession of America and Canada, yes, and of England, on to a new and higher basis; his cramming of his house, morning, noon, and night with students and visitors, so that came to be known as "Open Arms"; his fatal grief at the death of his son; the world-wide love of him a grief at his death!—they must all be stories here told. But two words will I add. One, this. Was I a young doctor, or Methodist minister, I would creep into some silent lecture hall or village church, and, laying these gloriously sacred volumes on a laboratory or communion table I would dedicate myself to the service of men's bodies and souls as God's great servant did. The other word is from "The mother of a child called Doris," and written after Wm. Osler's death. "He was gallant and debonair in a room full of discordant elements he entered and saw only his patient and only his patient's great need. Instantly the atmosphere was charged with kindly vitality, everyone felt that the situation was under control. . . . The deep, sad eyes of his watched a little cynically the light humour of mind. . . . He was as merciful as he was master. . . . Such telling love, such perfect confidence, was given him that he could do what he liked without causing offence. . . . He was one of those who, having great possessions, gave all that he had. For myself, I may say that every moment he gave me shines out illuminating the long years of my life. Subtle in temperament, direct in character, the brilliant mind and soaring spirit were unchallenged, because, under the surface of the gay man of the world, lived the Saint. It is when a man touches other people's lives that you know whether he brings life or death or nothing. Where that swift spirit has gone I do not know; but I know that to those he cared for on earth he brought life. They will look back and remember, and will thank God and take courage." Amen.