

Frank L. Plenderwell
CVS 417/27.1

Ames

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

7 May, 1920.

My dear Doctor Cushing:

In the Journal of the American Medical Association for March 27, 1920, I note that you are collecting material for a biography of the late Sir William Osler. I have pleasure in sending you herewith nine original communications from him, which I have arranged in chronological order, with approximate dates, where omitted by him, adding to each a short note explanatory of the contents, when this seemed advisable.

I realize that this is a small contribution toward your effort, but these short letters and cards are evidence of his abounding hospital-^{toward}ity/and interest in American visitors to England during the war.

I had the honor of being the Navy representative among a group of medical officers assigned for observation duty abroad in April, 1916. It developed later that Sir William Osler was instrumental in bringing about this, the first detail of officers to duty of this character to our allies. The other members of the mission were Colonel Alfred E. Bradley, M.C., U.S.A., Lieutenant-Colonels W. J. L. Lyster and Clyde S. Ford, M.C., U.S.A. In the Journal of the American Medical Association, June 17, 1916, under "Medical News", there appears a notice of a dinner at the Athenaeum Club, London, given in honor of this medical mission, by Sir Alfred Keogh and Sir William Osler. It was at this dinner that the question of responsibility for the sending over of the mission was referred to by both Sir Alfred and Sir William, in remarks made by them later in the evening, both disclaiming responsibility and both

declining to accept credit for the accomplishment. Sir Alfred Keogh closed his remarks with the statement that neither of them deserved the credit for initiating the movement to place medical observers abroad, that it belonged to a woman. The facts, so far as they concern Sir William Osler, are as follows: Early in 1916, Mrs. Whitelaw Reid found herself seated beside Sir Alfred Keogh at a dinner in London. The conversation touched this question of medical observers and some comment regarding the apparent indifference of our authorities to the importance of having medical observers abroad was made, and elicited from Sir Alfred the statement that he would be very glad to extend a hearty welcome to any group of observers officially designated, and that he would speak to Sir William Osler about the matter. The latter is said to have written the President, and soon after the above-mentioned officers were ordered to London, where they found a comprehensive program of inspection of camps, hospitals, ambulance trains, hospital ships, etc., awaiting them.

I think that these facts are of historical interest, and they serve, moreover, to emphasize again, though it needs no emphasis, the never-ending prodigality of effort on the part of Sir William Osler, where the interests of American medical men were concerned.

I am, with kind regards,

Sincerely yours,
Frank Lester Pleadwell.
 Frank Lester Pleadwell,
 Captain, Medical Corps,
 U.S. Navy.

Doctor Harvey Cushing
 Peter Bent Brigham Hospital,
 Boston, Mass.

P.S. I had the pleasure of meeting you at Donald Armour's in London, May 28, 1917.

Notes appended to letters from Sir William Osler to Captain Frank Lester Pleadwell, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy, between May 16, 1916 and December 31, 1917.

Letter No. 1.

A letter of invitation to spend the week ^{at Oxford} ~~end~~ after presentation of a letter of introduction from Doctor W.S. Thayer of Baltimore. Respecting this visit I find the following in my diary:

May 20, 1916. A cordial welcome from Sir William and Lady Osler at their charming house in Norham Gardens. Mrs. Chapin and Miss Mackenzie with them. Sir William shows me my room and invites attention to the conveniently placed lights over the head of the bed, and to an assortment of volumes on the bedside table, which on inspection later I found sufficiently varied to meet the most exacting of readers. (I did not find the Montaigne volume) a Religio Medici, of course. After the gloom and thickened atmosphere of London it was pleasant to sit on the verandah overlooking the garden and adjacent park, in bright sunlight, the birds singing and the trees in full bloom. Sir William always enlivening the conversation with his "quirks and fancies". A question arises about Mrs. Woodrow Wilson's ancestry, and Sir William has recourse to the encyclopedia to establish some point, the alleged descent from Pocahontas, I think, but in reading the reference he interpolates matter wholly irrelevant, with the object of mystifying Miss Mackenzie. He passes many droll comments on the change in time, which goes into effect this evening. Later we browse about his library, and he shows me a recent acquisition, of which he is most proud, and rightfully so, an almost perfect edition of Ambroise Pare's Anatomie Universelle, 1561, recently acquired from Paris, and he gleefully tells that he secured it by only a narrow margin of priority over other applicants, one being our Surgeon-General's Library in Washington. (He has described this find at length in the Annals of Medical History for Dec., 1917) I see a set of Benjamin Rush's Medical Inquiries and Observations on his shelves, and call his attention to the case history in one of the volumes, perhaps one of the earliest references in medical literature to the connection between

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friendship of enduring quality.

Letter No. 2.

Conveyed cards for the Libraries at the Royal Society of Medicine and the Royal College of Surgeons. From these institutions I derived much pleasure and instruction during my long stay in London, and met "the genial Scot" Professor Keith, to whom Sir William refers to in the letter.

Letter No. 3.

Paves the way for visits to the Hamstead Cardiac Hospital, where I later met Thomas Lewis, Sir James MacKenzie, Meakins, and others. The reference in this note about Rush and the teeth has been referred to previously.

Card No. 1.

Notice of a demonstration to the Harvard Unit then passing through London, by Professor Keith, at the Royal College of Surgeons.

Card No. 2.

When the first visit to the British Front in France was arranged for July, 1916, our medical mission, I was on a visit to the Grand Fleet at Scapae Flow, and so missed the opportunity to go. In September Sir Alfred Keogh accorded me another chance to go. I have always thought that Sir William, knowing of my disappointment, covertly arranged this visit for me.

Card No. 3.

This refers to a proposed call on Col. Bradley and me, while we were visiting Lady (now Viscountess) Harcourt at Nuneham Courtney, which is not far from Oxford. His failure to carry out the intention announced in the communication was due to a call from some stranded American, at some station down the line. Knowing his sympathetic attitude toward all Americans, of high or low degree, whenever any individual of this nationality was in trouble anywhere within this particular precinct, and perhaps beyond it, Sir William was appealed to, and he always responded. In this instance I believe it was an impecunious soldier.

focal infections and arthritis, appearing under the caption," An Account of the Cure of Several Diseases by the Extraction of Decayed Teeth".

Sir William had not seen this and urged me to record the observation.

(I did so later. See Jr.A.M.A., Mch. 15, 1919, Vol. 72, No. II, p. 817)

Early the following morning (Sunday) we went to Radcliffe Infirmary, where Sir William holds a clinic on Sunday for the benefit of certain medical students who are unable to attend all the week-day clinics. This action is illustrative of his ever-accommodating spirit, exerted, I fear, at some expense of his vitality. Then we took a turn about the Colleges. It was a rare privilege to see these institutions under guidance of Sir William Osler. As we walked about the deserted quadrangles and cloisters, it was poignantly borne in on one how greatly the war had depleted the colleges of their students. Many of the fellows and students are already on the roll of honor, and as Sir William said, these corridors have only ghostssas occupants. We went over Christ's Church in some detail, as Sir William is a Fellow of this college. He always attends at the evening meal of the Vice-Chancellor and Fellows on Sunday, and it was my privilege to accompany him/^{to the Great Hall} in the evening, sitting at the dons table between Vice-Chancellor Holland and Sir William, and later as we came to nuts and port, proceeding to the "common room", where I listened to a discussion between some Fellow and Sir William on an erudite subject in Grecian history. Earlier in the day he had made a special point of taking me/^{to the Library} to see a first edition of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, and to the Chapel to view a tablet to Robert Burton. In the afternoon the Army members of the mission come up from London and we inspect the Third Southern Territorial Hospital, which is located in a magnificent setting for a war hospital, namely in the Examination Halls of the University.

Early the next morning we motored to Cliveden, where we went about the wards of the Duchess of Connaughts Canadian Red Cross Hospital. This institution is placed in the grounds of Cliveden, that well-known country place now the property of the Astors. At lunch I had an opportunity of observing Sir William's popularity with children, for we lunched with Mrs. Brook and the Astor children, the latter being engagedd in one grand frolic/^{with Sir William} throughout the meal. At one point Sir William and the youngsters were shying potatoes at each other.

I parted from my host at this point, but from this visit there grew a

The reference to Rush signifies his intention to bring over his copy so that I might perfect an account I had written about the "teeth" business. None of the London editions of Rush had this case recorded.

Letter No. 4.

Refers to my proposed trip to Italy, and to a letter of introduction he gave me to Raffaele Bastianelli. The "Heavens, how I wish I could go with you" I followed up with an invitation to come along. At this time he was working himself to death. He was never quiet a moment, and whenever I ran across him in London these days, he was ever hurrying along on foot, with that nervous rapid gait, but never too busy to stop and shoot a shaft of wit, or offer his services in some direction or other.

Card No. 4.

Referring to the invitation to go to Italy.

Letter No. 5.

A letter upon hearing of my departure for the U.S.

Letter No. 6.

Refers to a letter I had written to tell of my detachment from the medical mission and from the Embassy, and to ask him to look out for my successor there.

I think the last time I saw Sir William was early in 1917, when Colonel Bradley and I met him at the Hampstead Cardiac Institute, and accompanied on a most instructive tour of the wards. He was at his very best this day, full of witty references, talking in epigrams, and often making illusions which went over the heads of many of us who were less erudite. For instance, as we left he enjoined us to return soon, and referring to me said, "Pleadwell there should by all means repeat his visit, as he is a disciple of Thebesius". Neither Bradley were at that time acquainted with Thebesius, and as a matter of fact I only recently located this medical anatomist in reading Howell's Physiology.

One cold raw day in December Bradley and I were on our way to Cambridge, to see a open air hospital there. We ran across Sir William just at the foot of Suffolk St on Park Row. When he heard of our pro-

posed trip to Cambridge, he said,"no medical man should go to Cambridge without meeting the second most celebrated medical man in England, the Regius Professor of Physic, Sir Clifford Allbutt," and forthwith he scribbled an introduction on his visiting card, and was off.