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*for Dr Knight  
and  
Madras*  
Editorial Page

CINCINNATI, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1919

# Old-World Chitchat

by M. Coligny

Spirit of Understanding and Co-Operation  
In World Politics and Medicine



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Feb. 28, 1919

SIR WILLIAM OSLER  
FROM THE PAINTING BY WILLIAM H. CHASE

The practice of medicine calls equally for the exercise of the head and hand, and when a man has done his best to have his motives misunderstood and his conduct of the case harshly criticized, not only by the family, but by a colleague who has been called in, small wonder, when the opportunity arises, if the old Adam prevails and he pays back in kind. So far as my observation goes there are three chief causes for the quarrels of doctors. The first is the lack of proper friendly intercourse by which alone we can know our colleagues. It is the duty of the older man to look on the younger one who settles near him not as a rival, but as a son. He will do to you just what you did to the old practitioner, when, as young man, you started—get a good many of your cases; but if you have the sense to realize that this is inevitable, unavoidable, and the way of the world, and if you have the sense to talk over, in a friendly way, the first delicate situation that arises, the difficulties will disappear and recurrences of a misunderstanding may be made impossible. The young men should be tender with the sensibilities of their seniors, deferring to their judgment and taking council with them.

I say advisedly an honest heart—the honest head is prone to be cold and stern, given to judgment, not mercy, and not always willing to entertain that true charity which, while it thinketh no evil, is anxious to put the best possible interpretation upon the motives of a fellow-worker. It will foster, too, an attitude of generous, friendly rivalry, untinged by the green peril, jealousy, that is the best preventative of the growth of a bastard scientific spirit—loving seclusion and working in a lock and key laboratory, as timorous of light as is a thief.

The best that is known and taught in the world—nothing less can satisfy a teacher worthy of the name, and upon us of the medical faculties lies a bounden duty in this respect, since our art, co-ordinate with human suffering, is cosmopolitan.

The spirit of the above quotations is part in the league with promptness it to-day a conquering force in world politics and medicine. It is the spirit which moves toward reasonableness, understanding, generosity and conscientious co-operation. This spirit shall yet weld the great free nations into a union dedicated to the promotion of human well-being, justice and peace. We the mass of us and the leaders of us can forget the obsolete fetish of unsplendid isolation, bull-headed antagonism to the sacrifice of a little sovereignty for great general good, and if personal prejudice, ambition, and the enemy's guile are not permitted to play the noble aspiration false. Of course, it is a pity that the issue is complicated by the enemy's efforts to make the league serve his wicked ends, and that the personal dislike we may entertain toward certain of its champions tends to befog the essential thing, but we must not deny the glory of the sun even on cloudy days. A league of free nations is no one man's dream. Nor is it the dream of any partisan set of men. It is the hope of peace and better justice of millions who have suffered terrible injustice, and who have fought the good fight for a better world to live in. They realize what has happened in the last four years and have vowed that no stone must be left unturned which might prevent such things from happening again.

If the present constitution of the League of Nations is undesirable write a better one. If it leaks, mend it. If it in any way jeopardizes the life of the nation most liable to future attack make proper safeguards. But whatever you do, don't kill the goose that has already laid golden eggs because you may object to color of some of its feathers or the style of some of its press agents. We have minor objections just as intense as yours, but they're very minor when we look at the whole bird.

And right here we would repeat a word of warning. Our purposes and duties as members of the league must be made clear. The good it promises will not be won by rhetoric, but by clear-cut vision and unselfish work. Moreover, the vagueness of the 14 points must be cleared away, and we must guard against the interpretation the Germans and radical Socialists place upon them, for the result of such interpretations would be an intolerable enemy triumph. If we cannot come to an understanding of our proper

part in the league with promptness it may be better to let the matter stand until after the war has been settled, for the enemy is reorganizing himself with astonishing speed and for a purpose. "We must insist," said Baron von Richten in Hamburg, "that Wilson's 14 points be carried out. We certainly shall not sign straightaway. After a few months the Entente will no longer be in a situation to resume the war."

In medicine the spirit which seeks understanding and brotherly co-operation has won a signal victory in the establishment of an Inter-Allied Fellowship of Medicine. The pioneer work was undertaken last summer by Lord Eustace Percy and Captain V. E. Sorapur of New York. Sir William Osler is its first President and Sir Arbuthnot Lane its Treasurer. Both these doctors have earned the regard due great physicians and great men in America, France and England. Sir William Osler in particular is claimed by all three countries as one of themselves. He is closely identified with the best of their medical work. His influence during the last two decades has, indeed, been almost boundless, while his "Principles and Practice of Medicine" has enjoyed a vogue rarely attained by any professional work. The tremendous service he had rendered during the war, his splendid courage in bereavement, his beautiful kindness and respect for age (despite much calumny to the contrary) has made him one of the most respected and beloved of international figures.

Probably Sir William has done more than any man of his time to secure a true perspective in health affairs. "His outlook has ever been of the broadest nature," writes the Times medical correspondent; "his instinct for first causes as opposed to end-results has enjoyed the honor and privilege of associates with him in any capacity have invariably found their viewpoint enlarged and their imagination stirred. For Sir William is not only a great doctor, he is a great student and a great man. This has been illustrated especially in his dealings with the younger generation of doctors. Many a young man owes his success and the success of his ideas to a discernment which saw the gold among the dross at a time when other eyes missed it, and to a friendliness and warmth of heart which have never been stinted. No man is so capable as Sir William Osler of drawing together British and American medicine. No man has labored with so single a purpose to this end through so many years."

—Sir William Osler.