

1905 +

# Interesting People

DR. WILLIAM OSLER

A handicap of crushing weight rests upon all the ambitious young medical gentlemen who swarm in clinic-studded Baltimore. It is their evil fate to be measured with a colossus. Say of one of them that he used to sit under Dr. Osler at the Johns Hopkins, and you are giving him high praise. Say of him, going further, that he promises, some day, to be worthy of his master, and you are at the limit of lawful eulogy.

Dr. Osler, of course, was not snatched up to Olympus the moment of his arrival. Like the new Johns Hopkins Medical School, which he came to nurse and glorify, he was received, at the start, with something not unlike polite suspicion. Saving only Dr. William H. Welch—that father of genius—no one quite appreciated his true stature.

But before long interesting news began to filter from the Hopkins. Dr. Osler was solving problems that the text-books put down as insoluble; he was ridding the art of medicine of cobwebs and barnacles; he was sending out parties of enthusiastic young men to explore the medical Farthest North and Darkest Africa. He observed things that no one else noticed, and he drew conclusions that violated the league rules. One day the newspapers became aware of him, and the next day the public. By and by, the doctors followed.

During the last few years of his residence in Baltimore, Dr. Osler might have used Druid Hill Park as a waiting-room. People came from all over the country to consult him, accompanied by their attendant physicians, surgeons, spiritual advisers and nurses; and no Baltimorean of position felt it decent to surrender his appendix without first seeking the advice of the great diagnostician.

In the end the doctors themselves drove him out of Baltimore. By the rules of the healing art, be it known, a physician is forbidden to accept a fee from a fellow-practitioner. Under this rule, the sick doctors of America paid glorious but embarrassing tribute to Osler. They arrived on every train, eager to hear medicine's last word. They were welcome, and it was a pleasure and privilege to see them—but there were classes to teach, books to read and write, clinics to look after, problems to ponder. The day brought a hundred hours' work, and but twenty-four hours of time.

Unexpectedly a message came from the King of England, offering Dr. Osler a royal appoint-

ment, with leisure unlimited, at Oxford. . . .  
Baltimore is mourning yet.—*H. L. Mencken.*