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August 23, 1922.

Miss Jean Cameron, Asst. Librarian,
Medical Library,
McGill University, Montreal.

Dear Miss Cameron:

Will you do me the great favour to look in the 1543 Vesalius which Sir William Osler gave to the Library, and see if by any possibility it contains a date either of purchase or of his donation. I have an undated letter which refers to it, and hope I may get the clue from you.

Will you please write below, on this same sheet, so as to save us both trouble.

Very sincerely yours,

Harvey Cushing

EXTRACT FROM NOTE ON THE FIRST EDITION OF VESALIUS, 1543.

"I am glad to be able to send this beautiful copy of the first edition to the library of my old school, in which anatomy has always been studied in the Vesalian spirit - with accuracy and thoroughness.

(Signed)

William Osler.

ROME, MARCH 9th. 1909.

*cf. letters of Osler 1903
says that he had sent another
one in 1903 (date ill)*

Jan 14-1921

In the hand. to the copy.

Note on the first edition of the Anatomy of Vesalius, 1543.

In itself, for what it contains, but still more for what it did, the *Humani Corporis Fabrica* is one of the great books of the world with which in the literature of medicine only *De Motor du Cordis* of Harvey is to be compared. The one revolutionized anatomy, the other created modern physiology. This work of Vesalius is the first modern treatise on anatomy, based upon dissection of the human body. To appreciate the extraordinary character of the descriptions of the plates, they must be compared with contemporary works. Vesalius really described the body as we know it, for the first time fully, and for the first time accurately. It is difficult to say whether in text or figure the departure from the anatomy of the day is more striking. There are grave mistakes of omission and commission, but they appear insignificant in a volume full of such important contributions. To the middle of the sixteenth century anatomy was taught from the writings of Galen, not from what was seen in the occasional public dissections. From what the great master has written there was no appeal, and the veneration with which his works were regarded, was to a gospel like the feeling men have towards the sacred scriptures, Imagine the surprise and consternation of the easy-going old professors, who held the chairs of anatomy, to have a huge volume thrust into their hands, filled from cover to cover with descriptions and figures which which they were unfamiliar, and written by a young man of 28! Headed by his old teacher, Sylvius, a storm of opposition soon raged and a vindication of Galen was attempted, but it was soon found that the old anatomy, correct enough in place was largely that of swine, dogs, and monkey~~s~~, while the *Humani corporis fabrica* contained descriptions and figures for human dissection. To understand a phenomenon, almost unique in the history science, of a revolution of this character effected by so young a man we must remember from boyhood Vesalius had had a perfect passion for dissecting. After devoting his energies to the anatomy of the domestic animals, he robbed graveyards and gallows for human skeletons, while as early as 1536-37, as prosecutor to Sylvius and *Guinterus* of Paris, he had opportunities to dissect the human body. His reputation must have been remarkable, as at the age of 23 he was appointed professor at Padua, one of the leading schools of Europe. The *de fabrica* remains a monument of human effort, one of the greatest in the history of our profession.

I am glad to send this beautiful copy of the first edition to the library of my old school, in which anatomy has always been studied in the Vesalian spirit with accuracy and thoroughness.

(W. Osler).

Rome, March 9th 1909.