

## Illustrations from the Wellcome Institute Library

### Wellcome and Osler

JOHN SYMONS\*

The lives of Sir William Osler (1849–1919) and Sir Henry Wellcome (1853–1936) have much in common: they were nearly coevals; both were natives of North America who ended their lives in England; both devoted their lives to medicine and achieved public honours; both are commemorated in a variety of eponymous institutions; more importantly for present purposes, both pursued the study of medical history and formed libraries which now bear their names. It would be unwise to push any of these parallels too far, but the common interest in medical history and book collecting does raise the question of what actual contact there was between the two. Older habitués of the Wellcome Institute will remember that from 1966 to 1973 the Institute's Seminar Room on the second floor of the Wellcome Building (approximately on the site of the present Wellcome Trust Boardroom) carried the joint dedication of 'The Wellcome-Osler Room' (in practice always shortened to 'The Osler Room'), which suggested some positive connection. In fact it seems to have been the personal inspiration of Dr Noël Poynter (1908–1979), former Librarian and Director, and did not long survive his retirement, though the name could occasionally be heard until the end of the 1980s, when the room ceased to exist.

Surviving papers in the Wellcome Institute Archives show that direct contact between Wellcome and Osler was minimal. However, Osler did have a cordial relationship with the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and with its first Curator, C J S Thompson (1862–1943). The correspondence between them shows that the Wellcome Museum in its early days was more outgoing than is usually realized. Folk-memory derives largely from the experiences of those who knew the Museum in the 1920s and 1930s, when Wellcome imposed a much more secretive regime culminating in 1932 in a total closure of the Museum, from which it did not emerge until 1949. The memory of Thompson's more accessible policy has thus been largely eclipsed. It was possibly not entirely to Wellcome's liking and seems to have been one of the factors contributing to the severance of relations between him and Thompson in November 1925.

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Osler settled in England in 1905 on appointment as Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford. His first appearance in the Wellcome Archives is in 1907, in the role of a rival collector. It is unlikely that their professional paths had crossed before then. Mr Wellcome the pharmaceutical manufacturer (or less politely “Wellcome the pill man”) moved in different circles from the leaders of the medical profession. He was not yet “Founder and Director of the Wellcome Historical Museum”, still less “Sir Henry Wellcome, Kt., LL.D., D.Sc., F.R.S., Hon. F.R.C.S.”<sup>1</sup> Thompson reported as follows on his dealings with the charismatic book dealer Wilfrid Michael Voynich (1865–1930):

I finally got him down to twenty-seven pounds. I found that it was necessary to close with him at once, as he was writing to Professors Fergusson [sic], Osler and others offering the work on anatomy and the early surgicals so . . . I decided to take them, as although the prices of some were rather stiff, I thought that on the whole they were not dear. I shall be glad to know if you approve of this.<sup>2</sup>

Exactly two years later, he reported in similar terms:

He said he must have an early decision as he knew he would have no difficulty in disposing of the MSS. especially, to Professor Osler and Professor Ferguson. The former has given him an open commission for all MSS. he can get on medicine, surgery and anatomy but, as he said, he had kept to his word and given me the first chance, being his oldest customer.<sup>3</sup>

Both these reports suffer from the loss of Voynich’s idiosyncratic English, as later recorded by his assistant Millicent Sowerby:

He spoke eighteen languages, all, so he told us, equally badly . . . “Mees Johnson is?” he would ask as he entered the shop . . . “No,” we would tell him, “she has gone to lunch”. “Oh, did she went?” would be Mr Voynich’s invariable comment.<sup>4</sup>

Curiously, although Voynich could claim Osler as a regular customer, they had not yet actually met, and this was still true even as late as 1913 when the newly joined Miss Sowerby provoked a tantrum by unwittingly failing to inform her employer that Osler was in the shop:

“Mees Sowerby, you have done unpardonable thing! What I can think? What I can do?? What I can say??? My God! What staff I have!!!” Then with a big sigh, “*O ma mie, Madonna Sanctissima!!!*”<sup>5</sup>

Wellcome always maintained an obsessive secrecy about his collecting activities but early in 1910 the imminence of the 17th International Congress of Medicine, scheduled for 1913, forced him to begin to break cover. On 18 February 1910 Thompson wrote: “It would be well if we made as soon as possible the announcement that the HME [Historical Medical Exhibition] will be held at that time, to prevent the Committee [of the International Congress] competing with us.”<sup>6</sup> Wellcome, who was then at Quito, Ecuador (where, incidentally, he had fatefully quarrelled with his wife Syrie), scribbled back on 27

<sup>1</sup> Letters written by Sir John MacAlister (1856–1925), Secretary of the Royal Society of Medicine, in support of Wellcome’s candidacy for the Athenaeum in 1924 confirm the prejudice against trade. (RSM Archives G28/Box 37.)

<sup>2</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Thompson Reports 18 January 1907. Professor “Fergusson” is John Ferguson (1837–1916) of Glasgow.

<sup>3</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Thompson Reports 18 January 1909.

<sup>4</sup> E Millicent Sowerby, *Rare people and rare books*, London, Constable, 1967, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Thompson Reports 18 February 1910.

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March: "Give a Syllabus. Inform the Committee the date of the HM Exn and ask their co-operation."<sup>7</sup>

Henceforward it was inevitable that word of Wellcome's plans for his Museum would begin to circulate among the medical profession, though it is not clear when it reached Osler's ears. It was in the following year, 1911, that their paths most memorably crossed. The main portion of the library of Dr Joseph Frank Payne (1840–1910), Harveian Librarian of the Royal College of Physicians and a leading medical historian, was to be sold at Sotheby's on 12–14 July 1911. It was to be offered first as a single lot and Osler was keen to secure it for Johns Hopkins. He had £2,000 guaranteed by W A Marburg of Baltimore. The Wellcome archives are silent on the subject (as usual when Wellcome was on the spot and able to conduct his business personally) but Osler's account is famous:

The executors had placed a reserve price of £2,700, but on the morning of the sale I received an intimation that it would be reduced to £2,500 . . . With Dr Henry Barton Jacobs and Dr George Dock, I went to Sotheby's at one o'clock on July 12th. A more rapid sale I never saw! The bidding began at £2,000 [sic], and within a minute it was knocked down to an unknown bidder at £2,300, a figure beyond that which Mr Marburg had mentioned, but Dr Jacobs and I were prepared to go to the reserve price had we had a chance! The name of the purchaser is not known, but I believe the collection remains in this country.<sup>8</sup>

A handwritten note in the Osler Library at McGill supplies additional details (Osler's erroneous figures are corrected by the Osler Librarian, W W Francis):

The Library was put up en bloc. Quaritch was bidding for us. It started at 2,000 [1,000], went up to 2,500 [1,500], and then £3,000 [2,000], and before I could consult with Q. it was knocked down at £3,300 (or 500) I forget which [2,300] . . . I would have gone to 3,500 [2,500] as it would have been easy to make up the balance from the sale of duplicates.<sup>9</sup>

Wellcome's agent, who gave his name as Tobin, still resists identification. He was presumably not one of Thompson's regular bidders, Bourne, Llewellyn and Stow, since they normally bid under their own names. The second part of the Payne collection was sold on 30–31 January 1912, this time as separate lots. Thompson subsequently reported to Wellcome:

I heard the other day from another source that Sir William Osler is using every endeavour to ascertain where the Library has gone to, and he is still very sore about losing it . . . I will obtain a copy of the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* in which I understand Sir William Osler has published an article on his "attempt to procure the famous library for the Johns Hopkins Medical School".<sup>10</sup>

It is a little hard to believe that Osler was still baffled after nine months, but if true, then Wellcome's attempts at secrecy were not always as futile as folk-memory suggests.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Sir W Osler, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 1912, 2: 249.

<sup>9</sup> Osler Library, McGill University, MS. inserted in Osler's copy of the Payne Sale catalogue.

<sup>10</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Thompson Reports 19 April 1912.

<sup>11</sup> A W J Haggis, *The life and work of Sir Henry Wellcome* (unpublished typescript), 1942, p. 511, states: "From the very commencement of his buying campaign in the sale rooms, secrecy . . . had to be preserved . . . It was not long, however, before his own identity, and that of all his representatives was well known, at least in the principal auction rooms of London."

The Payne contretemps notwithstanding—and it still rankled as late as 1917<sup>12</sup>—formal contact between Osler and Wellcome was established on 30 July 1912, when Osler wrote:

Knowing the interest you take in the History of Medicine, I think you will be pleased to know that at the last meeting of the Council of the Royal Medical Society [*sic*] Dr Norman Moore and I gave notice of a motion to form in October next a section on the History and Literature of Medicine. I hope we may have your active co-operation. Such a society would, I am sure, stimulate work upon the subject.<sup>13</sup>

Wellcome responded: “It will give me great pleasure either to become a member of it, or to give you any assistance I can to make the Section a success, and stimulate the work on this interesting subject.” (31 July 1912.) A similar approach was made to Thompson on 13 September and accepted by him (from his private address) on 20 September.

Meanwhile the plans for the opening ceremony of the Historical Medical Museum were moving forward. On 13 November 1912 Thompson reported to Wellcome that the date was fixed for 24 June 1913 and that, on Dr Raymond Crawfurd’s suggestion, the three speakers should be Dr Norman Moore, President of the Section of the History of Medicine of the Congress, Sir Thomas Barlow, President of the Royal College of Physicians, and finally Osler as President of the Royal Society of Medicine’s Historical Section. In January 1913 Wellcome’s Museum was accepted as the official museum of the Congress.

At the same time the new Section of the Royal Society of Medicine was taking shape: its inaugural meeting took place on 11 October 1912 and the first council meeting on 29 November, both with Osler in the Chair. At the latter Wellcome was one of the six proposed as corresponding (honorary) members, along with the botanist Sir William Thiselton-Dyer, the historians Sidney Young and Abbot Gasquet, C L Taylor, assistant-editor of the *British Medical Journal*, and the Orientalist A F R Hoernle.<sup>14</sup> Thompson’s reports to Wellcome reveal an element of cross-purposes over Wellcome’s letter of acceptance.<sup>15</sup> However, all six candidates were duly elected on 29 January 1913.<sup>16</sup> Wellcome appears to have attended only one meeting in Osler’s lifetime, on 10 October 1913,<sup>17</sup> but Thompson was a constant attender and contributor.

Two weeks later a sale at Puttick & Simpson’s on 13 February led to Osler’s first personal contact with the Wellcome Museum. Lot 278 was described as:

Medical MS. Chrysippus. Liber Trohele [*sic*] . . . on 253 pages of vellum, with an illuminated initial . . . and figure of a woman holding a sphere at page 65. . . .

\*.\*The author is mentioned by Chaucer in the Wife of Bath’s Prologue.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> This is attested by letters preserved in the Osler Library, McGill University, with Osler’s copy of the Payne Sale catalogue: A C Klebs to H B Jacobs, 14 November 1917, and H B Jacobs to Osler, 21 November 1917.

<sup>13</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Early Correspondence/Osler. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from this file.

<sup>14</sup> RSM Archives K46 (Section of the History of Medicine, Council Minutes 1912–1941).

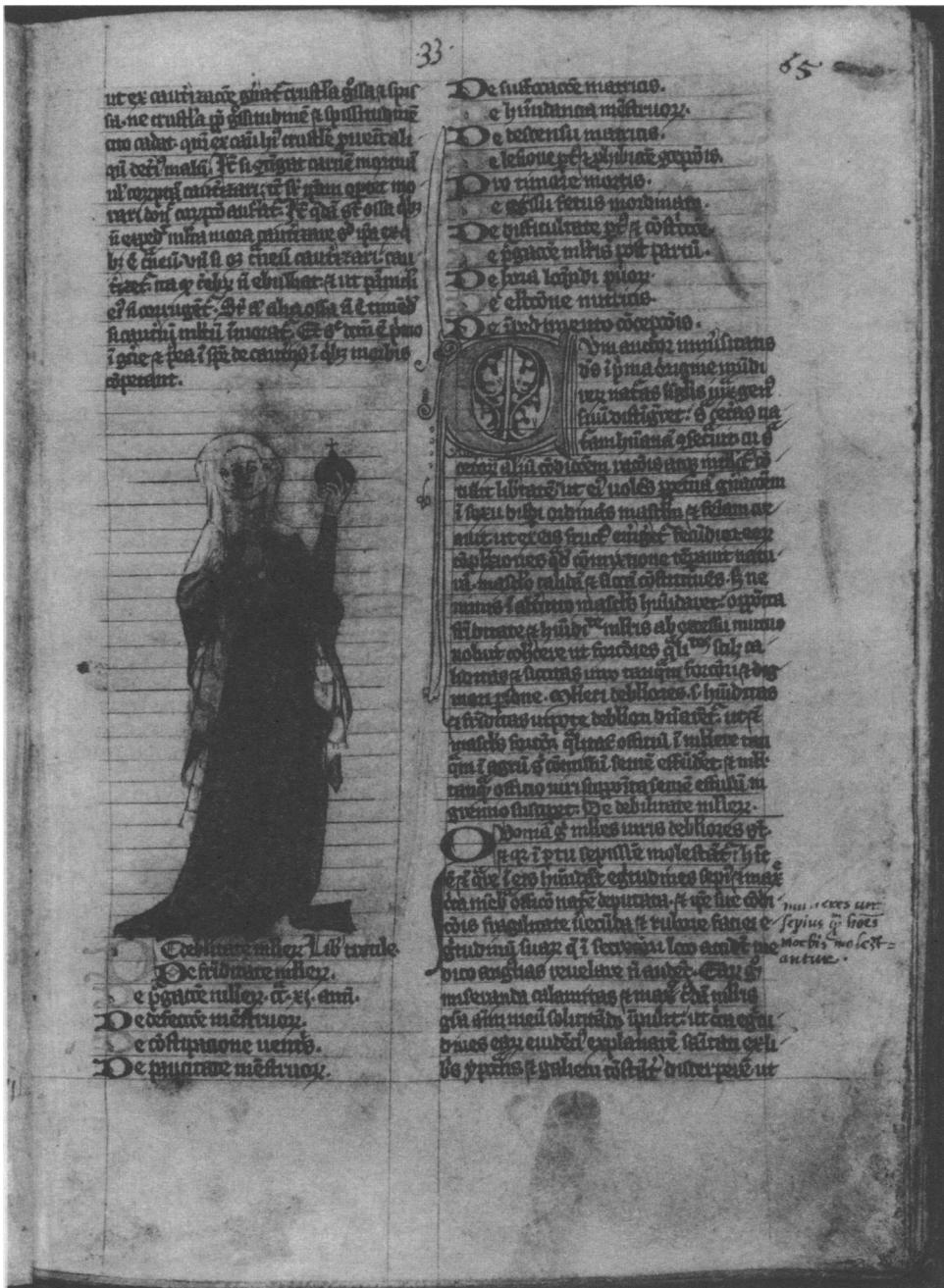
<sup>15</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Thompson

Reports 19 December 1912, with Wellcome’s response from Jebel Moya, Sudan, 1 January 1913.

<sup>16</sup> RSM Archives K48 (Section of the History of Medicine, Minutes of Meetings 1912–1944), also reported by Thompson on 29 January 1913 (Wellcome Institute Archives).

<sup>17</sup> RSM Archives K49 (Section of the History of Medicine, Attendance Book 1913–1944).

<sup>18</sup> Puttick & Simpson, *Catalogue of printed books, MSS. and drawings*, 13 February 1913. (British Library, S.C. (Puttick & Simpson).)



**Figure 1:** Commencement of 'De debilitate mulierum', ascribed to Trotula, in a fourteenth-century miscellany of medical writings. Western MS. 544, p. 65. (Wellcome Institute Library, London.)

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The lot was bought for Wellcome by Bourne for £12, as later described by Thompson:

“Libri trio hele” [sic] by Chrysippus . . . On this I put a limit of £75, but apparently owing to the big dealers being drawn off to Sotheby’s, I secured it for £12. (pencil note by Wellcome “good”).<sup>19</sup>

Osler meanwhile had written to Bourne on 14 February:

Dear Sir, Messrs Puttick & Simpson tell me that you purchased the MS. of Chrysippus yesterday. I am very anxious to see it and should have been glad to buy it. I would like to have the privilege of looking at it if you can arrange it.

A typed reply, purporting to be by Bourne from his home address, was sent out from the Museum on 15 February: “I purchased the MS. you mention on commission for a gentlemen [sic] and it has already passed out of my hands. I regret I am not at liberty to divulge his name as the business was confidential.” Osler responded immediately on 16 February, enclosing a letter to be passed on to the purchaser: “I am very much interested in the MS. of Chrysippus which has fallen into your hands, as he is an interesting character in the history of medicine. On some occasion, when convenient to you, I should like to see it.” This drew a reply from Thompson on the official notepaper of the International Medical Congress, dated 21 February, inviting Osler to visit the Historical Medical Museum and to see the manuscript. Osler duly came on 24 February, writing to Thompson on the next day:

I was delighted with the exhibition which should be one of the great features of the congress. Let me know if I can be of help at any time. Greetings to Dr Sambon.<sup>20</sup>

I have quite forgiven you for beating me in the matter of the Chrysippus and the Isaac!!

The manuscript is now Western MS. 544, a fourteenth-century miscellany including ‘Liber Trotule’, the writings ascribed to Trotula. The curious ascription to Chrysippus derives from an eighteenth-century owner’s note on the flyleaf: “The ingenious *Fabricius* . . . makes particular mention of this book, as also *Chaucer* in the Wife of Bath’s Prologue, ‘Chrysippus, Trotula, & Helowis’”. This was misunderstood by the auctioneer. ‘The Isaac’ refers to a pair of fourteenth-century manuscripts of Isaac Judaeus (WMSS. 369–370) bought by Llewellyn at Sotheby’s on the same day as the Puttick & Simpson sale.

Two days later, on 27 February, Osler was writing again (apparently to Wellcome):

It will give me great pleasure to be present at the opening of the Hisotrical [sic] Medical Museum on June 24th. I had the pleasure of visiting the Museum this week: it is a collection of extraordinary interest. Nothing like it has ever been put together.

On 14th March Thompson reported to Wellcome on his discussion with Norman Moore on the plans for the opening ceremony. Osler was now to second the vote of thanks and Wellcome noted in the margin: “What provision is made for Sir Wm Osler’s address? This is very important.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Thompson Reports 20 February 1913.

<sup>20</sup> Dr Louis Sambon (1865–1931), a specialist in tropical medicine, was employed to assist with setting up the Museum, though Thompson found that “it is most difficult to anchor him down to any

special work for an hour together” (Report 27 February 1913). (Wellcome replied “manage him in the patient and firm way as always”.)

<sup>21</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Thompson Reports 14 March 1913.

Osler approached Sambon on 24 March to borrow various photographs and on 10 May Thompson wrote to him in the hope of borrowing some Jenner relics. In the event Osler lent a copy of John Browne's *Adenochoiradologia . . . Together with the royal gift of healing* (1684).<sup>22</sup> On 13 June Thompson wrote to give Osler the final arrangements:

After Dr Norman Moore has declared the Museum open, and given a short address, Sir Thomas Barlow has been asked to propose a vote of thanks to him. Would you be so good as to second this, and at the same time, favour us with an address on some historical medical subject, on which you are so great an authority?

This personal participation by Osler was not to be. On 14 June he wrote to withdraw since, as ex-officio Master of the Almshouse at Ewelme, he was unavoidably committed to attend the annual meeting of the trustees: "The date has been fixed for some time. I would ask to have it changed, but unfortunately the Board is a very important one, including among its members the Vice-Chancellor, the Bishop and other very busy men."

The opening ceremony therefore took place without Osler, and Wellcome announced his intention of keeping the Museum as a permanency after the Congress. It remained open until October, much appreciated both by congress delegates and by the medical profession generally. Osler was sent a specially bound copy of the catalogue on 16 August, which he acknowledged on 8 September: "Thanks for the catalogue—What a work it must have been, but worth while as the Museum was one of the features of the Congress."

Osler's book was returned to him on 12 November. The Museum did not reopen until 28 May 1914 but during the period of closure it was able to be of service to Osler. On 4 December 1913 Thompson reported to Wellcome that at Osler's request he had provided a display of artefacts to accompany Dr J D Rolleston's paper on 'The medical aspects of the Greek Anthology' on the previous day at the Royal Society of Medicine.<sup>23</sup>

Early in 1914 another opportunity arose. On 19 January Osler was to deliver his presidential address to the Bibliographical Society on 'Printed medical books to 1480' and he enlisted Thompson's help with the associated display:

What special ones have you in the Wellcome Collection to this date [i.e. 1480]? You have that early Messue I think. Do you suppose Mr Wellcome would allow me to have any I have not got, to be on show at the side table? I would, of course, be responsible for their safety.

Thompson immediately submitted a list of books, tactfully pointing out that Osler had omitted to say which Society he was addressing:

If you will kindly mark those you would like to exhibit and return the list . . . I will bring them with me to 20 Hanover Square on Monday at 4.30 pm, or earlier if you wish.

When replying will you kindly let me know the name of the Society . . . so that I may find the right place.

<sup>22</sup> Receipt was acknowledged on 13 June. There were actually two copies in the Wellcome collection (one from the Payne sale), but most of the books were sealed up and inaccessible while the exhibition was in preparation.

<sup>23</sup> Wellcome Institute Archives. Thompson Reports 4 December 1913.

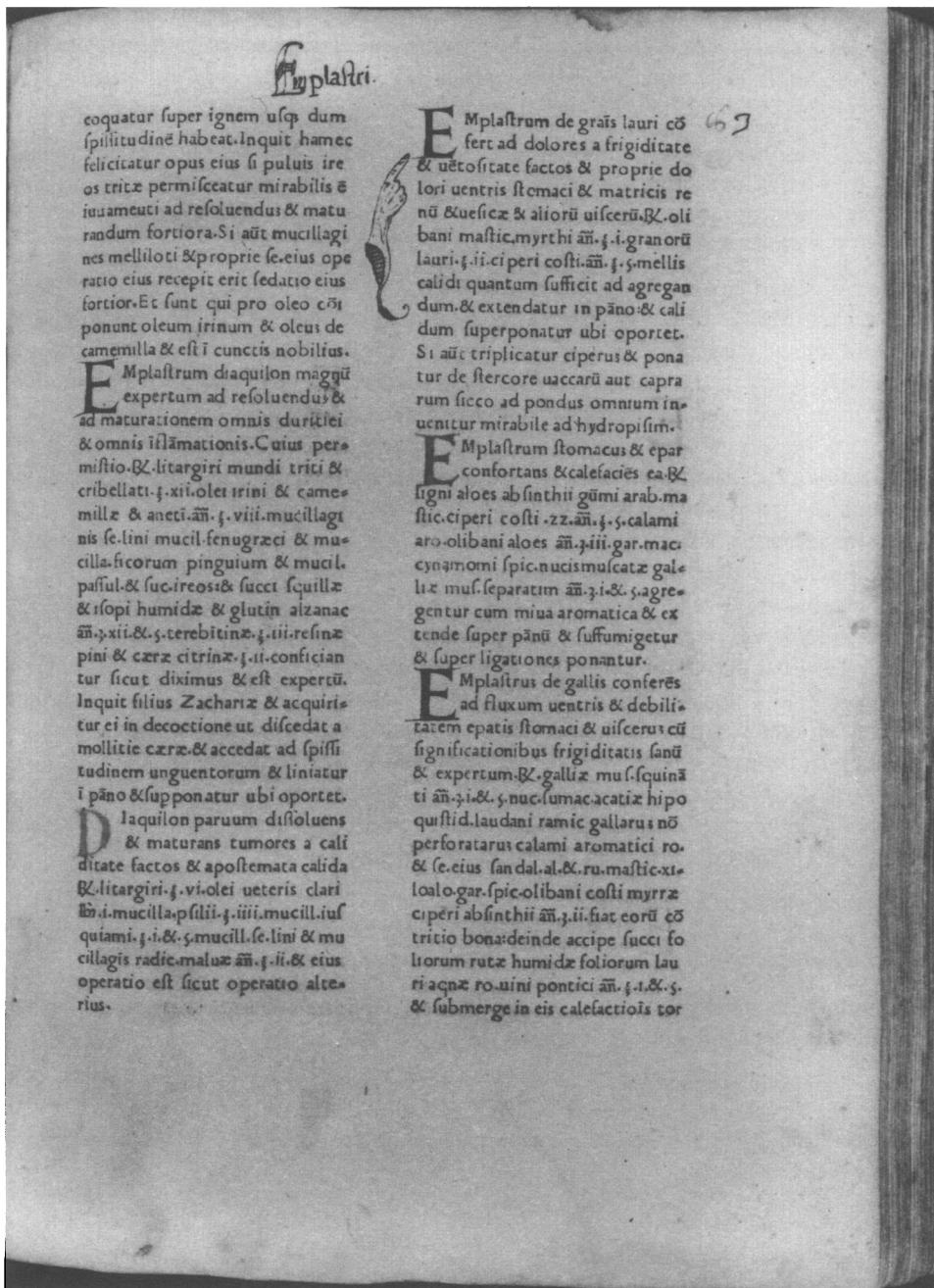


Figure 2: Folio 83 recto, from Mesue, *Opera medicinalia*, Florence, 1471. (Wellcome Institute Library, London.)

Osler responded (17 January 1914): "Could you have the books at the Bibliographical Society, 20 Hanover Square at 11 o'clock. Mr Prideaux will be there and in charge."<sup>24</sup> The meeting was a success and Osler wrote to Thompson on 20 January: "When you write to Mr Wellcome please tell him how much they added to the display."

An invitation to Thompson to dine with Osler on 28 January soon followed and it is pleasant to find that, admittedly in an afterthought, it was extended to the Librarian, T W Huck (1882–1918), even though Osler was confused about his status: "Please bring your friend to dinner on Wednesday I did not catch his name—the one who is helping you with the old books." Three weeks later, on 21 February, Huck wrote to Osler promising to compile a list of the Library's incunabula for the newly-established *Gesammtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*. Incunabula crop up again a year later, when Osler was working on the bibliography to be appended to his Bibliographical Society address. Thompson responded (20 March 1915):

We are making you out a list of our medical incunabula before and including 1480, and as soon as it is ready I will forward it on to you at Oxford. I do trust that your Presidential address will be printed, as it will be of great value and assistance to all engaged in historical medical research work.<sup>25</sup>

The list was sent on 20 April and Osler replied on the following day: "Thank you for the list. The Celsus you have marked 1487. I suppose it means 1478, *editio princeps*? Glad to see that you have got such a good collection."

From May 1914 onwards the exchange of letters is constant, covering a variety of subjects. Wellcome himself participates only once. Roger Bacon's seventh centenary in 1914 occasioned a project for the publication of his works under the editorship of Robert Steele (1860–1944). An attempt to secure Wellcome's financial support led to a personal letter from Osler:

I have been much interested in Roger Bacon, and particularly in his medical work. Steele has the originals now well in hand and ready for publication. Could you see him and take up the question of printing. I should be glad to discuss the matter with you both, as I [am] most anxious to see this part of Bacon's work published. (11 August 1915.)

Steele was in fact under contract to Burroughs Wellcome for five days' research per week, and the Advertising Manager, E F Linstead, advised that, rather than paying the costs of publication, Wellcome should allow Steele to work on the project in the firm's time for one or two days a week. Wellcome's reply to Osler postponed a decision: "I too am much interested in Bacon's medical and alchemical work and will gladly look into Steele's work and will consider what I can do when the war clouds have passed by." (17 August 1915.)

Meanwhile Osler kept up a regular exchange of letters with Thompson, mostly in the form of requests for information. They co-operated on assembling a display of publications and memorabilia relating to Jean Astruc (1684–1766), to illustrate a paper by Sir Alexander Simpson at the Royal Society of Medicine on 17 February 1915. Other

<sup>24</sup> W R B Prideaux (1880–1932), Librarian of the Reform Club, did much of the preliminary work for Osler's research on medical incunables. He later served as Wellcome's Librarian from 1921 to 1925.

<sup>25</sup> Osler's *Incunabula medica*, published by the

Bibliographical Society in 1923, contains his presidential address and a bibliography of medical works printed before 1481, edited by Victor Scholderer on the basis of Prideaux's groundwork.

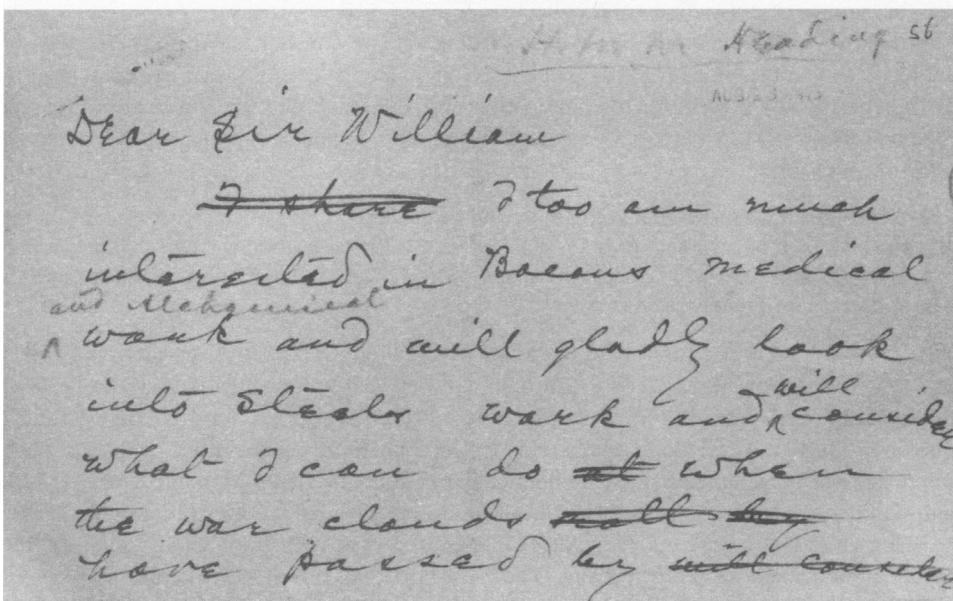
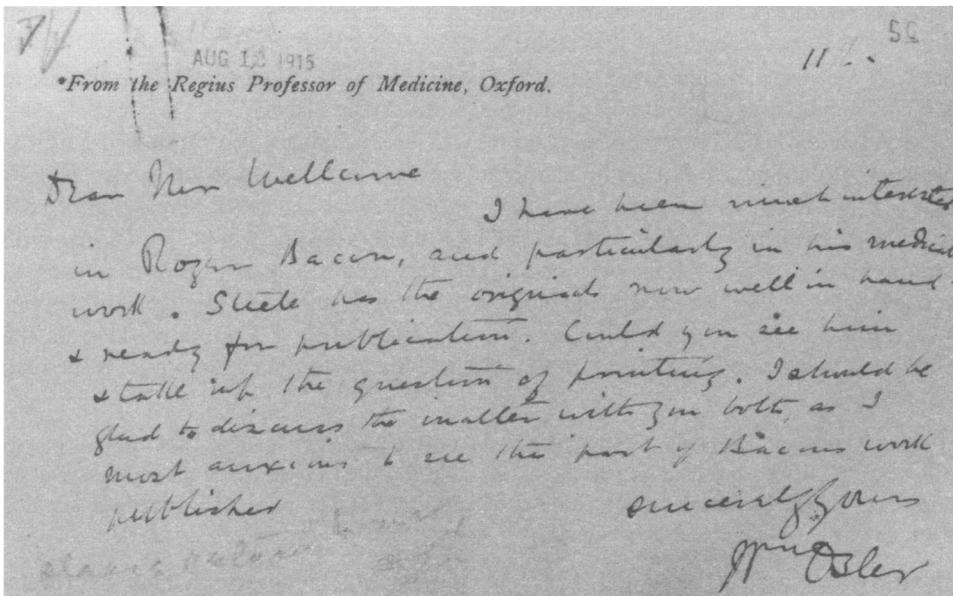


Figure 3: Osler's letter to Wellcome of 11 August 1915 expressing his interest in Roger Bacon, and part of the draft of Wellcome's reply of 17 August 1915. (Wellcome Archives, Early Correspondence/Osler, Letters nos. 55, 56.) (Wellcome Institute Library, London.)

subjects featured include Sir Thomas Browne, exorcisms, pomanders, and surgeons' apprenticeship indentures. Touch-pieces, given as tokens to scrofula sufferers "touched" by Stuart and earlier sovereigns are a recurrent topic. Thompson's letter to Osler of 1 May 1914 not only touched a chord with him. It also shows that at this period the Museum had a flexible policy towards duplicates, in contrast to Wellcome's later insistence on keeping everything:

I bought a number of touch-pieces the other day for the Museum, and had several duplicates. Dr Crawfurd has had two, and I still have a duplicate of Charles II in gold in nice condition; it cost 15/-. Would you care to have it? If so, I will forward it on.

Osler gladly accepted the touch-piece to be passed on to McGill. Some four months later he was perhaps surprised to receive an invoice for 15/- with a note from the Museum Secretary, F G Shirreff (1881–1916): "I think perhaps the above has escaped your notice." (22 September 1914.) Osler did eventually pay up, though not until the end of September 1916 (too late for Shirreff, one of the many infantry subalterns killed three months earlier on the first day of the Battle of the Somme).

In later letters through 1916 and 1917 Osler passed on details of his own acquisitions and provided casts for the Museum. One Elizabethan coin (doubtfully a touch-piece) prompted an intriguing digression (3 April 1916):

What is the earliest touch-piece you have at the Museum? A man brought today a Q. Eliz. 1601—a beauty which belonged to Harington of the W.C. fame. By the way you should have the Metamorphoses [sic] of Ajax and the picture of the first W.C. It would not be hard to make a model.

The Library still, surprisingly, lacks the 1596 edition of Harington's book.

On 18 December 1916 Osler approached Thompson with an offer of material:

There came in the other day the minute books (10–12 vols) of the old Royal Medico-Botanical Society—1822–1852(?)—an interesting record of futile human effort! They are not in my line and I took them to give the Society a decent burial somewhere. As they are largely botano-pharmacological the Wellcome [sic] Library might like to take them at what I paid £5—if not I will pass them on to the R.S.M. or the R.C.P.

The records of this Society founded by the egregious self-publicist John Frost (1803–1840), which enjoyed a meteoric thirty years' existence, would surely now be seen as useful research material, but Thompson's reply was dismissive:

I have gone carefully through them, but beyond being a record of their proceedings, there does not appear to be anything of sufficient interest to include in our collections at the Museum. At the same time it is a pity for them to be lost, and I think the most suitable home for them would be the Library of the Royal Society of Medicine. (12 January 1917.)

This reaction at least gives the lie to the myth that the Wellcome Museum would buy anything. The minute-books—nine volumes, from 1821 to the Society's dissolution in 1852—are now at the Royal Society of Medicine (Library MSS. L9/C/1–9).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Another collection of the Society's records, formerly in the possession of Dr Richard Hunter, is now in the Botany Library of the Natural History Museum. Further papers have been acquired by the Wellcome Institute (Western MSS. 6824 and 7148).

On the Society generally, see J F Clarke, *Autobiographical recollections of the medical profession*, London, 1874, pp. 240–1 and 267–82, and Brian Hill, 'A Georgian careerist, John Frost (1803–1840)', *Practitioner*, 1962, 188: 262–6.

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A topic running through 1918 is Edward Jenner. Osler wrote to Thompson: "What became of the Mockler collection of Jenner relics? Do you know anything of an address sent to Jenner by the Five Nations Indians? I have had an enquiry from Canada about it." (1 April 1918.) Thompson was able to assure Osler that the Mockler collection was now in the Wellcome Museum—actually only part of it—but could offer no help on the whereabouts of the address, or of other native American artefacts presented to Jenner. (Letters of 2, 4 and 8 April.) Jenner came up again in May, when Thompson was called on for information on portraiture, with reference to a painting offered for sale at Berthel's in Museum Street. He was unable to recommend purchase:

In my opinion it is a very poor piece of work: the figure is out of drawing and proportion. I do not think it can possibly have been the original oil painting by Smith. The face is not in any way like Jenner's and I could find no trace of authenticity about it. (4 June 1918.)

The outstanding remnant of the Mockler collection (mainly printed books, but including one of the original drafts of the *Inquiry*) was placed on sale at Sotheby's on 28 November 1918 by its then owner, the engineer and inventor Mikael Pedersen (1855–1929) of Dursley. Naturally Osler's interest was aroused:

Are you bidding heavily next week in [sic] those Jenner items? I should like some of them for my friend Dr Jacobs of Baltimore, but I would not bid against the Welcome [sic] Museum, as you should get what you want. I have not had word yet from Dr Jacobs. Maggs often bids for him on spec, but they too have had no word yet. (20 November 1918.)

Thompson's letter included sad news:

I intend, if possible, acquiring the Jenner pamphlets . . . as they originally formed part of the collection made by the Jenner family, which we have already deposited [sic]<sup>27</sup> here, so if you can keep others out of the field, I shall be glad . . .

Do you happen to know of a really capable man (young) who would make a good librarian for me? Poor little Mr Huck, (who [sic] you will no doubt remember) who joined the Army . . . has been missing since May last, and we can get no news of him whatever. I have tried my best through the British Red Cross Prisoners' Inquiry Committee without result, and I am afraid he is among the dead. (21 November 1918.)

Osler replied:

All right, I will send no specific bids for Dr Jacobs to Maggs, but I do not think they could be headed off from bidding on their own account, as they specialize in Jenner. I do not know of anyone. My own man is in Italy and I have a very good woman who might be free when he returns. . . . How cruel of you to buy that 1500 Galen when I wanted it so badly! (22 November 1918.)

In the event all the Jenner lots were secured by the Wellcome Museum. After this the correspondence is silent for nearly a year. A new Librarian, Cyril Barnard (1894–1959), later to be the distinguished Librarian of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, took up his duties at the beginning of 1919. On 12 July Osler celebrated his 70th birthday, but soon afterwards began gradually to succumb to pneumonia. He was due

<sup>27</sup> The first part of the Mockler collection had actually been purchased outright in 1911. See also, R J Palmer, 'The Wellcome collection of papers

relating to Edward Jenner', *Med. Hist.*, 1985, 29: 200–5.

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to give a paper on Laennec to the Royal Society of Medicine on 15 October and Thompson wrote to him: "Would you like me to bring round various specimens of Laennec's stethoscopes for exhibition that afternoon?" (3 October 1919.) Osler replied: "Many thanks for your kind offer, but I shall not be able to give my paper on the 15th. The late Theodore Williams gave to our medical department here his remarkable collection of original and copies of the Laennec stethoscopes: I had intended to show those. I hope you have been getting some treasures lately." (6 October 1919.)

Osler died on 29 December 1919. The letter of condolence sent to Lady Osler two days later enshrines the view of Osler felt by many:

You have a precious and beautiful heritage in your memories of Sir William's noble and useful self-sacrificing life. The world of science has lost by his death a leading light: one of its greatest teachers, and one of the most charming and delightful personalities of our day. It will take many years to fully realize all the fruits of his extensive and varied activities for the benefit of mankind.