

OSLER'S
"A WAY OF LIFE"
&
OTHER ADDRESSES,
WITH
COMMENTARY
&
ANNOTATIONS

Sir William Osler

Shigeaki Hinohara, M.D., and Hisae Niki, M.A.

With a foreword by John P. McGovern, M.D.

OSLER'S
"A WAY OF LIFE"
AND OTHER ADDRESSES,
WITH COMMENTARY AND
ANNOTATIONS

OSLER'S
"A WAY OF LIFE"
AND OTHER ADDRESSES,
WITH COMMENTARY
AND ANNOTATIONS

Sir William Osler

Shigeaki Hinohara, M.D., and Hisae Niki, M.A.

with a Foreword by John P. McGovern, M.D.

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

DURHAM & LONDON

2001

© 2001 Duke University Press

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Designed by Mary Mendell

Typeset in Aldus by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data appear
on the last printed page of this book.

TO
THE LATE DR. WARNER F. BOWERS,
THE LATE DR. GRANT TAYLOR,
AND
DR. JOHN P. MCGOVERN

CONTENTS

	Foreword	ix
	Preface	xv
	To the Reader	xix
	Chronology of Sir William Osler's Life	xxi
	1 A Way of Life	1
	2 Aequanimitas	19
	3 Sir Thomas Browne	31
4	The Old Humanities and the New Science	63
	5 Doctor and Nurse	99
	6 Teacher and Student	107
7	Physic and Physicians as Depicted in Plato	125
	8 The Leaven of Science	151
	9 Teaching and Thinking	173
	10 Nurse and Patient	187
	11 After Twenty-Five Years	201
	12 Books and Men	217
	13 Chauvinism in Medicine	227
14	The Master-Word in Medicine	251
	15 The Hospital as a College	275
	16 The Fixed Period	287
	17 The Student Life	305
	18 Unity, Peace, and Concord	331
	19 L'envoi	349
	20 Man's Redemption of Man	355
	Bed-Side Library for Medical Students	371
	Abbreviations	373
	References	375

FOREWORD

MORE THAN A century and a half after his birth and eighty years after his death, Sir William Osler (1849–1919) continues to be an icon for the medical profession. He followed a career of accelerating excellence, after his graduation from McGill University, first in Canada, then in the United States, and finally in Great Britain. In particular, at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore his medical expertise made him a leader of the profession and the most sought-after consultant in North America. He and his colleagues there perfected methods of medical education that continue to be the working model more than a century later. Dr. Hinohara's brief chronology of Osler's career succinctly epitomizes his remarkable life. Osler's influence spread rapidly through his many writings, innovative teaching, and way of life. His medical text, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine* (first edition, 1892), became the standard for the English-speaking world and, through translations, far beyond. It was this first edition that inspired the creation of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. But today it is his nonscientific books and articles that continue to be read, enjoyed, and oftentimes to inspire: his message is the practical art of living. One of his cardinal messages is the primacy of being humane, in one's life and one's patient-centered medical practice. The practical, everyday utility of his insight and example reaches beyond the practice of medicine and holds value for all who investigate his words. And it is Osler's essays that this book celebrates. It does so by presenting them anew to the reading public. But much more than that, it also clarifies the numerous literary allusions and metaphors that, a century and more after they were written, may be unclear to a public that is less at home with the classics of all ages than was the case then.

Although this collection of Osler's essays, with comments and annotations, is timeless, its publication could hardly be more timely. Finding one's way in the world of medicine today is a daunting challenge for health care providers as well as the recipients of their care. The profession of medicine presently is under severe pressure of a nature rarely if ever before witnessed, while the image of the physician is increasingly called into question. In addition to rapid technological growth and the massive accumulation of scientific data that physicians must understand, assimilate, and use on an ongoing basis, other profound forces have been shaping medicine and surgery at an accelerating rate during the past twenty years. Among the shifting influences on the contemporary practice of medicine are the recent healthcare reform programs, which greatly influence rationing of professional time; those caregivers whose time is excessively restricted may well lose altogether the interlude necessary to develop the trust that in turn empowers patients to enter into their own healing process.

There always has been societal pressure on the practice of medicine. Today, medical services are more in demand than ever before, at a time that people are less happy with the medical profession. This is true despite the fact that modern medicine empowers its practitioners to offer their patients more than ever before in the way of prevention, treatment, and cures to avoid or alter the course of disease. They have at their disposal precise technologies for diagnosis and for monitoring treatment, and exponentially more effective drugs than in Osler's day, and physicians are much better equipped than their forebears to relieve the agonies of constant pain and physical handicap. Nevertheless, doctors today are less trusted and respected than in years past. Could it be that in spite of the modern medical armamentarium an essential ingredient in medical care has been attenuated or neglected, and if so, what would it be?

There is today much debate as to whether the practice of medicine is a science, an art, a trade, a business, a profession, or some combination thereof. Here is what Osler stated in "The Master-Word in Medicine": "The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade; a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head." At the time of that quote (1903) there was precious little science, and the technology of medicine has advanced to a degree beyond imagination in his day. Today, one could speculate that Osler might say: "The practice of medicine is an art *based on science*; a profession not a trade; a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart must always be exercised along with your head." As technology and science advanced, Osler clearly would still have realized that a physician would always not be treating just a disease, but rather a *unique, living, feeling human being* with disease. The "heart" then signified compassion, empathy, and deep caring,

as it still does. That is the essential ingredient that seems to many patients to be neglected today. Far too often I hear such remarks as: “He/she doesn’t seem to really listen to me; to answer my questions; to explain anything; always appears to be in a hurry; I just feel that they don’t really care—I’m just a number.”

An inordinate overemphasis on science can easily tip the balance away from the art, the caring and compassionate side of medicine. Thus, between the science and the art, the rapid changes in healthcare delivery systems are challenging medical schools throughout the country to find and teach the relevance of that balance. Osler’s cogent observations and insight reflected in these essays give much timeless good guidance toward the resolution of this imbalance.

Osler insisted that for physicians to be properly educated to practice their art, knowledge of the science of medicine (limited as it was) must be supplemented by familiarity with the humanities. He believed firmly that the humanities were the leaven in the dough of caring, compassion, and empathy. “Twin berries on one stem, grievous damage has been done to both in regarding the Humanities and Science in any other light than complementary” (“The Old Humanities and the New Science”). His own command of the humanities shines through in these essays, and lights the way not only toward the practice of “head and heart” medicine, but a way of life for anyone.

What a burden a physician takes on: to be knowledgeable and up to date in medical science, versed in the humanities, and caring at every level of the struggle of the patient. This calls for one additional necessary attribute of a physician, a philosophy of life that enables him to carry and manage that burden, one that is clearly laid out in the first Osler essay, “A Way of Life.” In it he said that he owed much of his success to a simple habit, cultivated early in his life—one of “living in day-tight compartments.” He emphasized the wisdom of not dwelling morbidly on the mistakes and cares of yesterday or of anticipating with anxiety and fear what tomorrow might bring. Instead he urged that all of one’s resources be brought to bear on today, because “the load of tomorrow, added to that of yesterday, carried today makes the strongest falter.” Such an approach is also appropriate for the anxious patient or one in great pain. Pain is easier to bear if it is seen as just for today.

Even with the rapidly changing medical delivery system and the dominance of technological and scientific discoveries that occur at an accelerating pace, Osler’s ethics, principles, and practices portrayed herein, in concert with increasing efforts in our medical and nursing schools, could help transform and energize academic teaching and the delivery of quality care. Practicing physicians and nurses, as well as paramedics, physical therapists, and other invaluable

members of the healthcare team must all persevere as compassionate scientific healers.

Though there have been several other collations of Osler's addresses, no other exists with cogent comments before each essay, nor especially with comprehensive annotations, making each essay much more lucid for modern readers. We all owe a deep debt of gratitude to co-editor Professor Hisae Niki, for her expertise and devoted and persevering work for more than twenty years in making this book possible.

In a more personal vein, from my own lifetime experience as a teacher, clinician, and Oslerian, I am convinced that these annotations add clarity to the many metaphorical expressions, citations, and allusions, and thus an increased insight into these important Osler essays—thereby providing an invaluable resource not readily available prior to this publication. My great regret is that these outstanding annotations were unavailable to me many years earlier as they will be a tremendous asset for the serious reader. I strongly believe that all who thoughtfully read and digest the messages of the life and calling in this book will find enhanced satisfaction—even joy—in their demanding work. An understanding of Osler's patient-centered approach will especially help the healthcare provider participate in finding solutions to the pressing problems in our current healthcare delivery systems and to be better able to practice “head and heart” service to the ill who come to them in need; and who, in turn, will be much more satisfied with their care.

It is important not to forget that the messages of Osler are truly messages of life with practical insight about daily living and human potential that reach beyond the healthcare professional to all whom venture to turn these pages. No matter what one's occupation or calling, we all share in common a continual need to sharpen our skills at daily living. A gifted physician and teacher, Osler never ceased in his own quest for self-improvement as both a physician and a citizen. To that end, these essays represent a real treasure that extends the reach of his essays from the archives of medical history to our contemporary world of the new millennia.

About the Editor

Dr. Shigeaki Hinohara is an indefatigable, peripatetic international medical ambassador and renowned Oslerian. As an internist and educator, Dr. Hinohara has devoted more than sixty years to medicine and medical science, in his home country of Japan and internationally. He has developed and maintained a life-

long affiliation with St. Luke's International Hospital in Tokyo, where he is currently the chairman of its board. In addition, he also serves as the chairman of the board of St. Luke's College of Nursing and maintains a number of consultative positions in medical schools in Japan.

Dr. Hinohara received his M.D. degree from Kyoto University Medical School in 1938. There he also was awarded a Ph.D. for his study on atrial heart sounds, detected through the esophagus by a tiny microphone that he devised. Later, he undertook advanced studies in general internal medicine and residency training programs under Professor Paul Beeson at the Emory University School of Medicine.

Dr. Hinohara's affiliation with St. Luke's International Hospital dates back to 1941, when he joined the medical staff in the Department of Internal Medicine. In 1951, he became Chief Physician of that department, a position he held for a quarter century. During this period in his career, his principal medical interests were in the fields of cardiology, psychosomatic medicine, water and electrolyte metabolism, and preventive medicine.

From 1971 to 1989, Hinohara served on a number of governmental committees established by the Japanese Ministries of Education and Health and Welfare. His responsibilities included serving as chairman of the Council on Graduate Medical Education and chairman of the Council of Accreditation of Specialties Board.

Dr. Hinohara is a member of a number of Japanese medical organizations, including the Society of Medical Education and the Medical Society of Primary Care. Internationally, his memberships include fellowship in the American College of Cardiology and honorary fellowship in the American College of Physicians. He is past president of the International Society of Internal Medicine and the International Health Evaluation Association. Lately, his writings have focused on aging and hospice care and on alternative approaches in healing such as music therapy.

Among the plethora of awards that Dr. Hinohara has received over his extensive career are the Japanese Medical Association Supreme Award for Scientific Achievement (1982), the Japan-United States Visiting Medical Scientist, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia (1985), and the Japanese-American Award of Merit, from the Foundation of Thanatology, Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, USA (1992). In 1993 he received the Order of the Secret Treasure, Gold and Silver Star from the Japanese Emperor Akihito. In 1998 he was elected as one of two honorary citizens of Tokyo Metropolitan and also in that year received a Doctor of Humane Letters at the 174th Commencement from Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University. On November 3, 1999,

the Memorial Day of Culture in Japan, Dr. Hinohara was named by Ministry of Education, Science, Sports, and Culture a Person of Cultural Merit, the only physician so honored.

Dr. Hinohara is known as a great Oslerian who has spread Osler's principles and ideals throughout the world. He has conducted extensive studies and published articles and books about the life and works of Sir William Osler. He founded the Japan Osler Society in 1983 and still serves as its President; he was elected an honorary member of both the American Osler Society (1983), and the Osler Club of London (1984). Significant articles published in English relative to his Oslerian interests include "Osler's Peregrinations in Asia—A Report on an Unusual Event," *American Diseases of Children*, vol. 24, September, 1972, "Osler in Japan," *Osler Library Newsletter*, no. 45, February 1984, and "Sir William Osler's Philosophy on Death," *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 118:8, 13 April, 1993.

John P. McGovern, M.D.

PREFACE

WILLIAM OSLER (1849–1919) dedicated his life to practice, education, research, and social concerns in medicine. He was active in Canada, the United States, and Britain during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. This book is a collection of some of his nonclinical lectures, with added commentaries and bibliographical annotations that clarify the citations and metaphorical expressions he used.

Osler wrote 1,158 medical publications, and 182 literary papers and essays in his lifetime, of which we have chosen twenty. In 1905 he published a collection of his essays entitled *Aequanimitas with Other Addresses to Medical Students, Nurses and Practitioners of Medicine*.

“Aequanimitas,” the first essay in the volume, is the farewell lecture he gave when he resigned his position of Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. In it he emphasized that “aequanimitas” (serenity) of the mind is the most important quality for a physician, no matter what crises he might face. Subsequently, Osler gave twenty-two nonclinical addresses up to 1905, as Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University. They were addressed to medical students, nurses, medical practitioners and teachers at various medical schools, medical associations, nursing schools, and medical-science institutions.

In 1941, I started working as a hospital physician at St. Luke’s International Hospital, Tokyo, Japan. Immediately after World War II, in August 1945, St. Luke’s was requisitioned by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Forces as one of their army general hospitals. As I stood witnessing the hand-over ceremony, the head of this army general hospital, Dr. Warner Bowers, gave me a copy of *Aequanimitas with Other Addresses to Medical Students, Nurses, and Prac-*

titioners of Medicine. Ever since, the book has been my “comes viae vitaeque,” companion on the journey. Dr. Bowers himself admired Osler; I was told that the book was given to him by Eli Lilly and Company when he graduated from medical school, and even during the war he read it on the hospital ship.

With deepest appreciation I read this gift from Dr. Bowers. I then resolved, although the text was rather difficult, that one day I would translate it into Japanese for Japanese medical students. My plan was to select sixteen lectures out of the twenty-two, which are still applicable to contemporary medical personnel, and add four splendid lectures, ones that Osler gave after he moved to Britain in 1905 to become Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University. Those four are: “Sir Thomas Browne,” given in 1905 at Guy’s Hospital in London, which introduces this man, whom Osler greatly admired; “Man’s Redemption of Man,” a lay sermon delivered at a Sunday service for the students of the University of Edinburgh in 1910; “A Way of Life,” to the Yale students given in 1913 the day before he delivered the annual Silliman Lectures at Yale University; and “The Old Humanities and the New Science,” his Presidential Address delivered before the Classical Association at Oxford, May 1919, the year of Osler’s death.

In November 1980, Professor Hisae Niki of Meikai University (who was then a professor at St. Luke’s College of Nursing and a Shakespearean scholar) and I started translating the lectures into Japanese. By 1983, we had added over 800 annotations to the text, and published it through the medical publisher Igaku-Shoin Ltd. The book was widely read by the Japanese general public, not only by Japanese medical students, physicians, nursing staff, and other medical personnel. At the end of March 2001 more than 27,000 copies had been sold. In his lectures relating to medicine, Osler referred frequently to the literary and philosophical passages of ancient and contemporary authors, philosophers, and educators. But he lived in an age when people wrote allusively, making extensive references to literature and the Bible without citing chapter and verse, because all readers, sharing a common classical education, were expected to recognize the sources. Graceful allusion to those texts was the mark of a learned and distinguished writer. But Japanese readers are generally outside that common education of the English-speaking world, and thus our detailed commentaries and annotations must have enhanced the comprehension of the original difficult lectures for Japanese readers. That might be why more than twenty-seven thousand copies of the Japanese translation were sold.

Then the idea came to us that we might publish the original lectures with our commentaries and annotations in English. Such a book would help contemporary medical students and medical personnel in the English-speaking world to better understand Osler’s thoughts and spirit, for no longer was the “classical” education the prevalent academic curriculum as in Osler’s day.

For this purpose, Professor Niki visited many libraries in the United States, Canada, and Britain to work further on the annotations. After more than twenty years, with assistance from Professor Niki's friends such as Jane Kuwana of the United States and other scholars in the United States, Canada, and Britain, we completed the project.

Finally, I wish to express my warm and sincere gratitude to my friend and colleague Dr. John P. McGovern, founder of the American Osler Society, for his great efforts in helping structure and edit parts of this book, writing its foreword and in helping guide it to publication. I would also like to voice appreciation to Mr. Yuu Kanahara, president of Igaku-Shoin Ltd, for his expert technical help and support.

Shigeaki Hinohara, M.D.

XVII

PREFACE

TO THE READER

THE PRESENT TEXT is a collection of Osler's addresses aimed at sharing the importance and relevance of his ideas to modern times, in particular those writings that deal with ethics in the medical profession. The essays were originally published in *The Collected Essays of Sir William Osler*, ed. by John P. McGovern and Charles G. Roland (Birmingham: The Classics of Medicine Library, 1985); *Aequanimitas: With other Addresses to Medical Students, Nurses and Practitioners of Medicine*, 3d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961); *Selected Writings of Sir William Osler* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), and *Man's Redemption of Man* (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1913). The date when each address was originally delivered or printed is stated at the beginning of the chapter.

Osler's writings abound in references, the range of which is very extensive, to all literature from the classics down to the works of his contemporaries. The notes not only give definitions of words that may be unfamiliar to medical students and the general public but also clarify references—classical, historical, literary, theological, and medical (especially the names of Osler's contemporaries). Some explanatory notes have also been added to help elucidate the text. Obviously, medical schools have greatly changed, and Osler would certainly be waging different campaigns now; this book is not meant to propound his arguments for more laboratories nor his very Victorian views of women. However, we have decided to leave these issues intact for their historical interest and hope that the reader will focus on those things that do not change. Examples of these are the physician's need for perspective and equanimity; the relationship among physicians and between physician and patient; and the complementary but still understressed roles of the humanities and the sciences. Although his writings are

primarily directed to medical students, we hope they will give enjoyment and inspiration to many others, including physicians, nurses, librarians, and laypeople, and that they will add richness to each reader's life.

Since this project has occupied me for over twenty years, my indebtedness to colleagues and other scholars is correspondingly extensive. Directly and indirectly I am indebted to the work of many preceding editors and scholars. I also owe much to the staff of several libraries: especially, the Osler Library (McGill University), the Bodleian Library (Oxford University), the Library of the University of Illinois, the Library of Johns Hopkins University, the Library of Iowa State University, the Library of the University of Toronto, and many other institutions. My thanks are especially due to Dr. Faith Wallis and Mrs. June Schachter, Osler Library, for having facilitated my work.

XX
TO THE
READER

I am most grateful and deeply indebted to Jane Kuwana for preparing the introductory notes before each address. In the preparation of the manuscript and in proofreading, I had the assistance of Sylvia Garfield, Alicia Andre, Megumi Kishino, and Kiyoshi Nanao (Igaku-Shoin Ltd.), to all of whom I express my sincere thanks.

Dr. Miriam Skey, on the staff of the Records of Early English Drama at the University of Toronto, was very encouraging and helpful in looking over some of my chapters. Also, I owe special gratitude to Dr. William Cooke, now an independent scholar in Toronto, for his editorial assistance, in reading all the chapters in manuscript and making many valuable suggestions.

Last of all, I would like to thank Dr. Hinohara and Dr. McGovern. This book would never have been conceived nor brought to publication without their steadfast guidance and support of my efforts.

Hisae Niki, M.A.

CHRONOLOGY OF SIR WILLIAM OSLER'S LIFE

1849 (July 12) Born in Bond Head, Upper Canada (later Canada West, now the Province of Ontario), youngest son of Rev. Featherstone Lake Osler and Ellen Free (Pickton).

1857 (March) Family moves to Dundas, the very western tip of Lake Ontario.

1866 (January) Enters Trinity College School, an independent school for boys, then in Weston and now in Port Hope. Meets Rev. W. A. Johnson, founder and warden of Trinity College School and Dr. James Bovell, medical director appointed by the bishop. Both men had a great influence upon the young Osler.

1867 (autumn) Enters Trinity College, Toronto, with the idea of becoming a clergyman. Later, he abandons the idea to become a physician.

1868 (autumn) Enrolls in Toronto School of Medicine.

1869 (February) "Christmas and the Microscope" published in *Hardwicke's Science-Gossip*, his first published paper.

1870 (autumn) Enters the McGill Medical Faculty in Montreal because of the better clinical opportunities it had to offer. Meets Dr. Robert Palmer Howard, his mentor.

1872 (spring) Graduates from McGill.

1872–1874 Spends two years studying in Europe visiting clinics in London, Berlin, and Vienna.

1874 (July) Receives an offer to lecture upon the Institutes of Medicine at the McGill Medical Faculty.

1875 (April) Upon the death of Dr. M. Drake, he is officially appointed professor of medicine at the McGill Medical Faculty.

1878 (summer) Visits Britain (London and Edinburgh) with George Ross to take his membership of the Royal College of Physicians and to work in clinical medicine.

1879 (May–July) Starts teaching clinical medicine at the Montreal General Hospital. During the following five years he teaches physiology and pathology in the winter season and clinical medicine in the summer.

XXII

CHRONOLOGY

1884 (spring) Spends time in Europe (London, Berlin, Leipzig) and accepts an appointment as professor of clinical medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

(October) Appointed professor of clinical medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. This is the beginning of a twenty-one-year period of work and residence in the United States.

1888 (September) Appointed professor of medicine and physician in chief at the new Johns Hopkins Medical School and Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.

1889 (May) “Aequanimitas,” a valedictory address, delivered to the graduates in medicine of the University of Pennsylvania.

1891 (June) “Doctor and Nurse” delivered to the first class of graduates from the Training School for Nurses at the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

1892 (February) *Principles and Practice of Medicine* published.

(May) Marries Grace Linzee (Revere), widow of Dr. Samuel W. Gross of Philadelphia.

(October) “Teacher and Student” delivered at the opening of the new medical buildings of the University of Minnesota.

(December) “Physic and Physicians as Depicted in Plato” delivered at the meeting of the Johns Hopkins Hospital Historical Club.

1894 (May) “The Leaven of Science” delivered at the opening of the Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology at the University of Pennsylvania.

1895 (January) “Teaching and Thinking—The Two Functions of a Medical School” delivered at the opening of the new building at the McGill Medical Faculty.

(December 28) His son, Edward Revere Osler, born.

1897 (February, June) "Nurse and Patient" delivered in February at the commencement exercises of the Training School for Nurses at the Philadelphia Hospital, and again in June at the commencement exercises of the Training School for Nurses at the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

1899 (September) "After Twenty-Five Years" delivered before the faculty and students of the Medical Faculty, McGill University.

1901 (January) "Books and Men" delivered at the opening of the new building of the Boston Medical Library.

1902 (September) "Chauvinism in Medicine" delivered before the Canadian Medical Association.

1903 (October) "The Mater-Word in Medicine" delivered at the opening of the new laboratories for physiology and pathology of the University of Toronto, thirty-five years after he studied there.

(December) "The Hospital as a College" delivered at the Academy of Medicine, New York.

1904 (August) Accepts the offer of the Regius Chair of Medicine at Oxford University.

1905 (February) "The Fixed Period," a farewell address, delivered at the commencement exercises before the alumni, faculty, and students of Johns Hopkins University. (April) "The Student Life," a farewell address to Canadian and American medical students, delivered at McGill University, and later the same month at the University of Pennsylvania. (April) "Unity, Peace, and Concord," a farewell address to leaders of the medical profession of the United States, delivered at the annual meeting of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland, Baltimore. (May) "L'Envoi," a speech at a farewell dinner in New York, delivered before leaders of the medical profession of Canada and the United States. (June) The Oslers move to Oxford. Appointed regius professor of medicine at Oxford University.

(October) "Sir Thomas Browne" delivered at the Physical Society of Guy's Hospital, London.

1910 (July) "Man's Redemption of Man: A Lay Sermon" delivered at McEwan Hall, Edinburgh.

1911 (June) Baronetcy conferred by King George V.

1913 (April) "A Way of Life" delivered to Yale students. His last visit to the United States.

1917 (August) The Oslers' son Revere killed in Belgium while on active service as an officer in the Royal Field Artillery.

1919 (May) "The Old Humanities and the New Science" delivered before the Classical Association of Oxford. Osler was president of the Association.

(July) Has a sharp attack of bronchial pneumonia.

(December 29) Dies aged 70.

1920 (January 1) A simple service at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford held for "one of the most greatly beloved physicians of all time" (Cushing).

XXIV

CHRONOLOGY

References

Cushing, Harvey. *The Life of Sir William Osler* (1925). Reprint. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Golden, Richard L. and Charles G. Roland, eds. *Sir William Osler, An Annotated Bibliography with Illustrations*. San Francisco: Jeremy Norman and Co., 1988.

Nation, Earl F., Charles G. Roland, and John P. McGovern. *An Annotated Checklist of Osleriana*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1976.

OSLER'S
"A WAY OF LIFE"
AND OTHER ADDRESSES,
WITH COMMENTARY AND
ANNOTATIONS

1

A WAY OF LIFE

What each day needs that shalt thou ask,
Each day will set its proper task.

GOETHE

APPARENTLY IT WAS suggested to Osler that his address to Yale students in 1913 should be either moral or religious, but he chose instead to give a simple homespun message, “a handle to fit your life tools.” He recommends developing a way of life based on established habits. He attributes his own successes not to his brains but to the simple habit of living only for the present. He quotes Thomas Carlyle, “Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.”

With the analogy of a ship closing off watertight compartments to keep afloat, Osler urges learning to control “day-tight” compartments in one’s life. By shutting off thoughts of the past or of the future, one may channel all one’s energy to the present task. Osler advocates beginning each day without regrets for things done or left undone. Fantasies and dreams of the future should be ignored except on rare occasions. Steady work and concentration on the task at hand, day after day, are his prescription to avoid frantic work, overly long hours, and burnout.

Mental control and a good attitude are necessary to avoid the feelings of inertia that Goethe says “make the morning’s lazy leisure usher in a useless day.” Osler warns that a poor diet and excesses of tobacco, alcohol, or sex can rob the body of the physical fitness needed for a good outlook. He alludes to Plato’s team of horses: unless the driver can master them, the black steed of Passion pulls the white horse of Reason off course.

Osler also urges spiritual concern, prayer, and reading the Bible to make one

aware that, although much changes, love, hope, fear, faith, and passion remain unchanged. "The quiet life in day-tight compartments will help you to bear your own and others' burdens with a light heart," guided by the example of physicians of the past.

A WAY OF LIFE

FELLOW STUDENTS—EVERY MAN has a philosophy of life in thought, in word, or in deed,¹ worked out in himself unconsciously. In possession of the very best, he may not know of its existence; with the very worst he may pride himself as a paragon. As it grows with the growth it cannot be taught to the young in formal lectures. What have bright eyes, red blood, quick breath, and taut muscles to do with philosophy? Did not the great Stagirite² say that young men were unfit students of it?³—they will hear as though they heard not, and to no profit.⁴ Why then should I trouble you? Because I have a message that may be helpful. It is not philosophical, nor is it strictly moral or religious, one or other of which I was told my address should be, and yet in a way it is all three. It is the oldest and the freshest, the simplest and the most useful, so simple indeed is it that some of you may turn away disappointed as was Naaman the Syrian⁵ when told to go wash in Jordan and be clean. You know those composite

An address delivered to Yale students on April 20, 1913. Published by Constable & Co., London, 1913; by Hoeber, New York, 1914; and in Osler's *The Student Life and Other Essays*, London, 1928, 75–99.

1. *in thought, in word, or in deed*: Osler is probably remembering “by thought, word, and deed” from the form of confession found in the Communion service in the *Book of Common Prayer*. However, in the Anglican High Church it has also been customary for a long time for the priest and altar boy(s) to use a form containing the phrase “in thought, word, and deed” before celebrating the Communion, and Osler could conceivably have remembered that from serving for Father Johnson in his boyhood.

2. *the Stagirite*: Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), who was born in Stagira, Greece.

3. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 1, chap. 3, 1095a:3–10.

4. *they will hear as though they heard not, and to no profit*: This sentence is a reminiscence of a very common Biblical image: Isaiah 6:9 (quoted by Jesus in Matthew 13:14) and 42:20, etc. The words “to no profit” actually occur in 2 Timothy 2:14 but in a different context.

5. *Naaman*: A Syrian captain who was cured of leprosy by Elisha, a Hebrew prophet. Naaman was in-

tools, to be bought for 50 cents, with one handle to fit a score or more of instruments. The workmanship is usually bad, so bad, as a rule, that you will not find an example in any good carpenter's shop; but the boy has one, the chauffeur slips one into his box, and the sailor into his kit, and there is one in the odds-and-ends drawer of the pantry of every well-regulated family. It is simply a handy thing about the house, to help over the many little difficulties of the day. Of this sort of philosophy I wish to make you a present—a handle to fit your life tools. Whether the workmanship is Sheffield or shoddy,⁶ this helve will fit anything from a hatchet to a corkscrew.

My message is but a word, *a Way*, an easy expression of the experience of a plain man whose life has never been worried by any philosophy higher than that of the shepherd in *As You Like It*.⁷ I wish to point out a path in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err;⁸ not a system to be worked out painfully only to be discarded, not a formal scheme, simply a habit as easy—or as hard!—to adopt as any other habit, good or bad.

I

A few years ago a Xmas card went the rounds, with the legend 'Life is just one "derved" thing after another,' which, in more refined language, is the same as saying 'Life is a habit,' a succession of actions that become more or less automatic. This great truth, which lies at the basis of all actions, muscular or psychic, is the keystone of the teaching of Aristotle, to whom the formation of habits was the basis of moral excellence. 'In a word, habits of any kind are the result of actions of the same kind; and so what we have to do, is to give a certain character to these particular actions.' (*Ethics*.)⁹ Lift a seven months old baby to his feet—see him tumble on his nose. Do the same at twelve months—he walks. At two years he runs. The muscles and the nervous system have acquired the habit. One trial after another, one failure after another, has given him power. Put your fin-

dignant because Elisha did not come out of his house and lay his hands on him with prayer, but merely sent his servant to tell him to go and wash in the Jordan. Nevertheless, he obeyed the prophet and was cured (2 Kings 5:9–10).

6. Sheffield, a city in Yorkshire, England, is famous for products of superior quality. Osler here uses the alliteration, "*Sheffield or shoddy*." The latter means "of inferior quality."

7. Corin, a shepherd, states his simple philosophy to Touchstone, a clown. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III, ii, 24–32, 76–81.

8. Isaiah 35:8. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness . . . the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Osler refers to a path, the way of holiness, as used in the Bible.

9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 2, chap. 1, 1103b:21–24.

ger in a baby's mouth, and he sucks away in blissful anticipation of a response to a mammalian habit millions of years old. And we can deliberately train parts of our body to perform complicated actions with unerring accuracy. Watch that musician playing a difficult piece. Batteries, commutators, multipliers, switches, wires innumerable control those nimble fingers, the machinery of which may be set in motion as automatically as in a pianola, the player all the time chatting as if he had nothing to do in controlling the apparatus—habit again, the gradual acquisition of power by long practice and at the expense of many mistakes. The same great law reaches through mental and moral states. 'Character,' which partakes of both, in Plutarch's words, is 'long-standing habit.'¹⁰

Now the way of life that I preach is a habit to be acquired gradually by long and steady repetition. It is the practice of living for the day only, and for the day's work, *Life in day-tight compartments*.¹¹ 'Ah,' I hear you say, 'that is an easy matter, simple as Elisha's advice!'¹² Not as I shall urge it, in words which fail to express the depth of my feelings as to its value. I started life in the best of all environments—in a parsonage, one of nine children. A man who has filled Chairs in four universities, has written a successful book,¹³ and has been asked to lecture at Yale, is supposed popularly to have brains of a special quality. A few of my intimate friends really know the truth about me, as I know it! Mine, in good faith I say it, are of the most mediocre character. But what about those professorships, &c.? Just habit, a way of life, an outcome of the day's work, the vital importance of which I wish to impress upon you with all the force at my command.

Dr. Johnson¹⁴ remarked upon the trifling circumstances by which men's lives are influenced, 'not by an ascendant planet, a predominating humour, but by the first book which they read, some early conversation which they have heard, or some accident which excited ardour and enthusiasm.'¹⁵ This was my

10. Plutarch, *Moralia: On Moral Virtues*, trans. W. C. Helmbold (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), vol. 6, p. 35.

11. Osler coined this term from the watertight compartments in ships.

12. See p. 3.

13. Osler, the youngest son in a family of nine children, was born in a parsonage at Bond Head, Tecumseh, Ontario, Canada. He taught at four universities: McGill, Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins, and Oxford. Here he refers to his textbook *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*, first published in 1892, which was very popular among medical students of his time. It went through many editions and was translated into German, French, Spanish, and Chinese.

14. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784): English critic, author, and lexicographer who compiled the first great English dictionary. He was called the "Great Cham of Literature."

15. It was believed that the ascendant planet at the time of one's birth would have a commanding influence on one's life and fortune. In the old theory of physiology one of the four humors (phlegm, blood, yellow bile, and black bile) was also supposed to determine one's characteristics.

case in two particulars. I was diverted to the Trinity College School, then at Weston, Ontario, by a paragraph in the circular stating that the senior boys would go into the drawing-room in the evenings, and learn to sing and dance—vocal and pedal accomplishments for which I was never designed; but like Saul seeking his asses,¹⁶ I found something more valuable, a man of the White of Selborne type,¹⁷ who knew nature, and who knew how to get boys interested in it. The other happened in the summer of 1871, when I was attending the Montreal General Hospital. Much worried as to the future, partly about the final examination, partly as to what I should do afterwards, I picked up a volume of Carlyle, and on the page I opened there was the familiar sentence—‘*Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.*’¹⁸ A commonplace sentiment enough, but it hit and stuck and helped, and was the starting-point of a habit that has enabled me to utilize to the full the single talent entrusted to me.

II

The workers in Christ’s vineyard were hired by the day;¹⁹ only for this day are we to ask for our daily bread,²⁰ and we are expressly bidden to take no thought for

Samuel Johnson, “Pope,” *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (1783; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968), vol. 3, p. 174. Johnson’s original passage reads: “Not by an ascendant planet or predominanting humour, but by the first book which they read, some early conversation which they *heard*, or some accident which excited ardour and *emulation*” (italics added by editor).

16. Saul, while seeking his father’s asses, met Samuel, a prophet, to whom God had revealed that Saul would become the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:3–27).

17. Osler is comparing his earliest mentor, Rev. W. A. Johnson, to Gilbert White.

William Arthur Johnson (1816–1880): Canadian cleric, schoolmaster, geologist, and naturalist. He was rector of St. Philip’s Church, Weston, and founding headmaster of Trinity College School, an independent high school for boys, then at Weston and now at Port Hope. Osler studied there for eighteen months, and his interest in natural science was apparently sparked by Johnson, who owned the first microscope in Toronto and used to take his boys fossil hunting (from Rev. Donald Henderson, Johnson’s successor at St. Philip’s). He influenced Osler to enter the medical profession. Osler frequently refers to him in his writings; see “Sir Thomas Browne,” p. 33.

Gilbert White (1720–1793): English naturalist and clergyman. Author of *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789), which was one of Osler’s favorite books.

18. *Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand*: Osler’s favorite passage; from Thomas Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (1829; London: Chapman & Hall, 1899), p. 56. Carlyle’s original reads: “Our grand business undoubtedly is,” instead of “Our main business is.”

19. *The workers in Christ’s vineyard were hired by the day*: Matthew 20:1–16.

20. *ask for our daily bread*: Matthew 6:11 and Luke 11:3. The phrase is in the Lord’s prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

the morrow.²¹ To the modern world these commands have an Oriental savour,²² counsels of perfection²³ akin to certain of the Beatitudes,²⁴ stimuli to aspiration, not to action. I am prepared on the contrary to urge the literal acceptance of the advice, not in the mood of Ecclesiastes—‘Go to now, ye that say to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow;’²⁵ not in the Epicurean spirit of Omar with his ‘jug of wine and Thou,’²⁶ but in the modernist spirit, as a way of life, a habit, a strong enchantment, at once against the mysticism of the East and the pessimism that too easily besets us. Change that hard saying ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof’ into ‘the goodness thereof,’²⁷ since the chief worries of life arise from the foolish habit of looking before and after.²⁸ As a patient with double vision from some transient unequal action of the muscles of the eye finds magical relief from well-adjusted glasses, so, returning to the clear binocular vision of to-day, the over-anxious student finds peace when he looks neither backward to the past nor forward to the future.

I stood on the bridge of one of the great liners, ploughing the ocean at 25 knots.²⁹ ‘She is alive,’ said my companion, ‘in every plate; a huge monster with

21. *take no thought for the morrow*: Matthew 6:34. “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.”

22. Though sometimes regarded as a distinctive teaching of Christianity, these commands are found in one form or another in many ethical systems. See Omar Khayyám’s lines:

Ah, my Belovèd, fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regret and future Fears:
To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday’s Sev’n Thousand Years.

The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, 3rd ed., trans. Edward FitzGerald, (1872), quatrain 21.

23. Matthew 19:21. Jesus tells the rich young man “if thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come *and* follow me.” This is one of the precepts of Jesus to be perfect.

24. Matthew 5:3–12 and Luke 6:20–23. Any of the declarations of blessedness pronounced by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

25. *Go to now, ye that say to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow*: James 4:13–14. Osler has miscited this passage as from Ecclesiastes instead of the Epistle of James.

26. Omar Khayyám (1048–1131): Persian poet and astronomer. He symbolizes a person given to indulgences in sensual pleasures, especially drinking and women. *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, 3rd ed., trans. Edward FitzGerald, (1872), quatrain 12.

27. Matthew 6:34. See p. 7, n. 21.

28. *looking before and after*: The phrase is a reminiscence of a line of a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley, “To a Skylark,” lines 86–87. The exact quotation is:

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:

(cf. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV, iv, 37).

29. Osler sailed on April 5, 1913, on the *Campania* with William McDougall and F. W. Mott. He wrote

brain and nerves, an immense stomach, a wonderful heart and lungs, and a splendid system of locomotion.' Just at that moment a signal sounded, and all over the ship the watertight compartments were closed. 'Our chief factor of safety,' said the Captain. 'In spite of the *Titanic*,'³⁰ I said. 'Yes,' he replied, 'in spite of the *Titanic*.' Now each one of you is a much more marvellous organization than the great liner, and bound on a longer voyage. What I urge is that you so learn to control the machinery as to live with 'day-tight compartments' as the most certain way to ensure safety on the voyage. Get on the bridge, and see that at least the great bulkheads are in working order. Touch a button and hear, at every level of your life, the iron doors shutting out the Past—the dead yesterdays. Touch another and shut off, with a metal curtain, the Future—the unborn to-morrows. Then you are safe—safe for to-day! Read the old story in the *Chambered Nautilus*,³¹ so beautifully sung by Oliver Wendell Holmes, only change one line to 'Day after day beheld the silent toil.' Shut off the past! Let the dead past bury its dead.³² So easy to say, so hard to realize! The truth is, the past haunts us like a shadow. To disregard it is not easy. Those blue eyes of your grandmother, that weak chin of your grandfather, have mental and moral counterparts in your make-up. Generations of ancestors, brooding over 'Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate—Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge, absolute,'³³ may have bred a New England conscience, morbidly sensitive, to heal which some of you had rather sing the 51st Psalm³⁴ than follow Christ into the slums.³⁵ Shut out the yesterdays, which have lighted fools the way to dusty death,³⁶ and have no concern for you personally, that is, consciously. They are there all right, working daily in us, but so are our livers and our stomachs. And the past, in its uncon-

this on the steamer for America during the journey (Harvey Cushing, *The Life of Sir William Osler*, vol. 2, pp. 349–353).

30. One year before this talk, the *Titanic*, a British passenger steamship, collided with an iceberg and sank on April 14, 1912, and 1,513 lives were lost. The *Titanic* had been believed to be unsinkable because it had several separate watertight compartments; but it struck an iceberg, whose submerged peaks penetrated several compartments and let in enough water to sink the vessel.

31. A poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes in *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, chap. 4, stanza 3, line 1. The exact quotation is: "Year after year beheld the silent toil."

32. Matthew 8:22. The exact quotation is: "But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." Osler here replaced "the dead" with "the dead past."

33. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 2, lines 559–560.

34. Psalm 51:1–9, a Psalm of David; a prayer asking for mercy, cleansing, and forgiveness.

35. A "New England conscience" is the kind that characterized the original settlers of New England. They were Calvinist Nonconformists, who emphasized the Reformation doctrine that salvation comes by personally professing a strong faith and avoiding bad habits, with less emphasis on going out and doing good deeds. W. A. Johnson and Osler's other mentors belonged to the school of religion that put equal or greater value on doing good for others.

36. *have lighted fools the way to dusty death*: William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V, v, 22–23.

scious action on our lives, should bother us as little as they do. The petty annoyances, the real and fancied slights, the trivial mistakes, the disappointments, the sins, the sorrows, even the joys—bury them deep in the oblivion of each night. Ah! but it is just then that to so many of us the ghosts of the past,

Night-riding Incubi
Troubling the fantasy,³⁷

come in troops, and pry open the eyelids, each one presenting a sin, a sorrow, a regret. Bad enough in the old and seasoned, in the young these demons of past sins may be a terrible affliction, and in bitterness of heart many a one cries with Eugene Aram, ‘Oh God! Could I so close my mind, and clasp it with a clasp.’³⁸ As a vaccine against all morbid poisons left in the system by the infections of yesterday, I offer ‘a way of life.’ ‘Undress,’ as George Herbert says, ‘your soul at night,’³⁹ not by self-examination, but by shedding, as you do your garments, the daily sins whether of omission or of commission, and you will wake a free man, with a new life. To look back, except on rare occasions for stock-taking, is to risk the fate of Lot’s wife.⁴⁰ Many a man is handicapped in his course by a cursed combination of retro- and intro-spection, the mistakes of yesterday paralysing the efforts of to-day, the worries of the past hugged to his destruction, and the worm Regret allowed to canker⁴¹ the very heart of his life. To die daily,⁴² after the manner of St. Paul, ensures the resurrection of a new man, who makes each day the epitome of a life.

9

A WAY OF LIFE

III

The load of to-morrow, added to that of yesterday, carried to-day makes the strongest falter. Shut off the future as tightly as the past. No dreams, no visions,

37. Charles Lamb, “Hypochondriacus,” lines 30–31. Incubi (plural of incubus) are imaginary demons or evil spirits supposed to descend upon sleeping persons.

38. Eugene Aram (1704–1759): A linguist who killed a shoemaker to obtain some insignificant property. The title and hero of a poem by Thomas Hood, “The Dream of Eugene Aram, the Murderer,” lines 35–36.

39. George Herbert, “The Church Porch,” stanza 76, line 453.

40. Lot’s wife was changed into a pillar of salt for looking back during their flight from Sodom (Genesis 19:26).

41. *the worm Regret allowed to canker*: The phrase is a reminiscence of a line of a poem by George Gordon Byron, “On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year,” stanza 2, lines 5–8. The exact quotation is:

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

42. *die daily*: 1 Corinthians 15:31.

no delicious fantasies, no castles in the air, with which, as the old song so truly says, 'hearts are broken, heads are turned.'⁴³ To youth, we are told, belongs the future, but the wretched to-morrow that so plagues some of us has no certainty, except through to-day. Who can tell what a day may bring forth? Though its uncertainty is a proverb, a man may carry its secret in the hollow of his hand. Make a pilgrimage to Hades with Ulysses,⁴⁴ draw the magic circle, perform the rites, and then ask Tiresias⁴⁵ the question. I have had the answer from his own lips. The future is to-day — there is no to-morrow! The day of a man's salvation is *now*⁴⁶ — the life of the present, of to-day, lived earnestly, intently, without a forward-looking thought, is the only insurance for the future. Let the limit of your horizon be a twenty-four-hour circle. On the title-page of one of the great books of science, the *Discours de la Méthode* of Descartes (1637), is a vignette showing a man digging in a garden with his face towards the earth, on which rays of light are streaming from the heavens; beneath is the legend '*Fac et Spera.*'⁴⁷ 'Tis a good attitude and a good motto. Look heavenward, if you wish, but never to the horizon — that way danger lies. Truth is not there, happiness is not there, certainty is not there, but the falsehoods, the frauds, the quackeries, the *ignes fatui*⁴⁸ which have deceived each generation — all beckon from the horizon, and lure the men not content to look for the truth and happiness that tumble out at their feet. Once while at college climb a mountain-top, and get a general outlook of the land, and make it the occasion perhaps of that careful examination of yourself,⁴⁹ that inquisition which Descartes urges every man to hold once in a lifetime — not oftener.

43. *hearts are broken, heads are turned*: Robert Browning, "In a Balcony," line 61 (Constance's line). The exact quotation is:

What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?
You are the fate, your minute's in the heaven.

44. *Ulysses*: Latin name for Odysseus (king of Ithaca), one of the heroes of the *Iliad* and the protagonist of the *Odyssey*. After the Trojan War, during his adventures in his ten-year attempt to return home, he made a journey to Hades, the underworld inhabited by departed souls.

45. *Tiresias* (also *Teiresias*): The blind Theban soothsayer who appears in Homer's *Odyssey*, book 11, lines 90–130.

46. *the day of salvation*: 2 Corinthians 6:2.

47. *Fac et Spera*: (Latin) "do (i.e., venture) and hope." René Descartes (1596–1650), French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist, who emphasized reason. Also known for his "principle of certainty: I think, therefore I am" (cogito ergo sum).

48. *ignes fatui*: (Latin) foolish flames; flitting phosphorescent lights seen at night that signify something deluding or misleading; mere illusion.

49. *climb a mountain-top, and get a general outlook of the land, and make it the occasion perhaps of that careful examination of yourself*: Perhaps a reminiscence of Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, book 14, lines 1–129. Wordsworth describes climbing Mount Snowdon in Wales to see the sunrise from the summit, then continues:

Waste of energy, mental distress, nervous worries dog the steps of a man who is anxious about the future. Shut close, then, the great fore and aft bulkheads, and prepare to cultivate the habit of a life of day-tight compartments. Do not be discouraged—like every other habit, the acquisition takes time, and the way is one you must find for yourselves. I can only give general directions and encouragement, in the hope that while the green years are on your heads, you may have the courage to persist.

IV

Now, for the day itself! What first? Be your own daysman! and sigh not with Job for any mysterious intermediary,⁵⁰ but prepare to lay your own firm hand upon the helm. Get into touch with the finite, and grasp in full enjoyment that sense of capacity in a machine working smoothly. Join the whole creation of animate things in a deep, heartfelt joy that you are alive, that you see the sun, that you are in this glorious earth which Nature has made so beautiful, and which is yours to conquer and to enjoy. Realize, in the words of Browning, that 'There's a world of capability for joy spread round about us, meant for us, inviting us.'⁵¹ What are the morning sensations?—for they control the day. Some of us are congenitally unhappy during the early hours; but the young man who feels on awakening that life is a burden or a bore has been neglecting his machine, driving it too hard, stoking the engines too much, or not cleaning out the ashes and clinkers. Or he has been too much with the Lady Nicotine, or fooling with Bacchus, or, worst of all, with the younger Aphrodite⁵²—all 'messengers of strong prevailment in unhardened youth.'⁵³ To have a sweet outlook on life you must have a clean body. As I look on the clear-cut, alert, earnest features, and the lithe, active forms of our college men, I sometimes wonder whether or not Socrates and Plato would find the race improved. I am sure they would love to look on such a gathering as

11

A WAY OF LIFE

It appeared to me the type of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.

50. *Be your own daysman! and sigh not with Job for any mysterious intermediary*: Job 9:33. The original reads: "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, *that* might lay his hand upon us both." The rare and obsolete word "daysman" means "arbitrator" or "mediator." Job here laments that no one can act as an arbitrator between him and God, to ensure that God treats him fairly.

51. Robert Browning, "Cleon," lines 239–241.

52. *Lady Nicotine, Bacchus, and the younger Aphrodite*: They personify tobacco, wine, and sexual passion, respectively. *My Lady Nicotine* (1890) is the title of a collection of humorous essays on smoking by the Scottish essayist and playwright James Barrie.

53. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I, i, 34–35.

this. Make their ideal yours—the fair mind in the fair body.⁵⁴ The one cannot be sweet and clean without the other, and you must realize, with Rabbi Ben Ezra, the great truth that flesh and soul are mutually helpful.⁵⁵ The morning outlook—which really makes the day—is largely a question of a clean machine—of physical morality in the wide sense of the term. *C'est l'estomac qui fait les heureux*,⁵⁶ as Voltaire⁵⁷ says; no dyspeptic⁵⁸ can have a sane outlook on life; and a man whose bodily functions are impaired has a lowered moral resistance. To keep the body fit is a help in keeping the mind pure, and the sensations of the first few hours of the day are the best test of its normal state. The clean tongue, the clear head, and the bright eye are birth-rights of each day. Just as the late Professor Marsh⁵⁹ would diagnose an unknown animal from a single bone, so can the day be predicted from the first waking hour. The start is everything, as you well know, and to make a good start you must feel fit. In the young, sensations of morning slackness come most often from lack of control of the two primal instincts—biologic habits—the one concerned with the preservation of the individual, the other with the continuance of the species. Yale students should by this time be models of dietetic propriety, but youth does not always reckon the rede⁶⁰ of the teacher; and I dare say that here, as elsewhere, careless habits of eating are responsible for much mental disability. My own rule of life has been to cut out unsparingly any article of diet that had the bad taste to disagree with me, or to indicate in any way that it had abused the temporary hospitality of the lodging which I had provided. To drink, nowadays, but few students become addicted, but in every large body of men a few are to be found whose incapacity for the day results from the morning clogging of nocturnally-flushed tissues. As moderation is very hard to reach, and as it has been abundantly shown that the best

54. Plato, *Timæus*, 87e.

55. Robert Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra," line 72. The exact quotation is:

Let us cry, 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul,

56. (French) "It is the stomach that makes people happy." This may be from the Greek philosopher Epicurus. See p. 15, n. 75.

57. François Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694–1778): French philosopher, historian, and essayist.

58. *dyspeptic*: A person with indigestion (due to local causes or to diseases that are present elsewhere in the body).

59. Othniel Charles Marsh (1831–1899): American paleontologist and professor at Yale (1866–1899) who collected fossils on expeditions to the West.

60. *reck the rede*: To say that youth often ignores advice, Osler adapts a line from *Hamlet* (I, iii, 51). The exact quotation is:

Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own rede.

of mental and physical work may be done without alcohol in any form, the safest rule for the young man is that which I am sure most of you follow—abstinence. A bitter enemy to the bright eye and the clear brain of the early morning is tobacco when smoked to excess, as it is now by a large majority of students. Watch it, test it, and if need be, control it. That befogged, woolly sensation reaching from the forehead to the occiput,⁶¹ that haziness of memory, that cold fish-like eye, that furred tongue, and last week's taste in the mouth—too many of you know them—I know them—they often come from too much tobacco. The other primal instinct is the heavy burden of the flesh which Nature puts on all of us to ensure a continuation of the species. To drive Plato's team⁶² taxes the energies of the best of us. One of the horses is a raging, untamed devil, who can only be brought into subjection by hard fighting and severe training. This much you all know as men: once the bit is between his teeth the black steed Passion will take the white horse Reason with you and the chariot rattling over the rocks to perdition.

With a fresh, sweet body you can start aright without those feelings of inertia that so often, as Goethe says, make the morning's lazy leisure usher in a useless day.⁶³ Control of the mind as a working machine, the adaptation in it of habit, so that its action becomes almost as automatic as walking, is the end of education—and yet how rarely reached! It can be accomplished with deliberation and repose, never with hurry and worry. Realize how much time there is, how long the day is. Realize that you have sixteen waking hours, three or four of which at least should be devoted to making a silent conquest of your mental machinery. Concentration, by which is grown gradually the power to wrestle successfully with any subject, is the secret of successful study. No mind however dull can escape the brightness that comes from steady application. There is an old saying, 'Youth enjoyeth not, for haste'; but worse than this, the failure to cultivate the power of peaceful concentration is the greatest single cause of mental breakdown. Plato pities the young man who started at such a pace that he never reached the goal.⁶⁴ One of the saddest of life's tragedies is the wreckage of the career of the young collegian by hurry, hustle, bustle, and tension—the

61. *occiput*: The lower back part of the skull.

62. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 253c–254e.

63. *make the morning's lazy leisure usher in a useless day*: This quote by Goethe has not been identified.

64. Probably Osler refers to Theaetetus, mathematician, friend, and disciple of Plato. He is said to have been fatally wounded during the Corinthian war (390–387 B.C.), which would make the age of his death about twenty. However, the later date, 369, which has also been suggested, makes him a little too old for Socrates' beautiful remark, "that he would most certainly be a great man, if he lived" (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 142c).

human machine driven day and night, as no sensible fellow would use his motor. Listen to the words of a master in Israel, William James:⁶⁵

Neither the nature nor the amount of our work is accountable for the frequency and severity of our breakdowns, but their cause lies rather in those absurd feelings of hurry and having no time, in that breathlessness and tension, that anxiety of feature and that solicitude of results, that lack of inner harmony and ease, in short, by which the work with us is apt to be accompanied, and from which a European who would do the same work would, nine out of ten times, be free.⁶⁶

Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,⁶⁷ but it need not be for all day. A few hours out of the sixteen will suffice, only let them be hours of daily dedication—in routine, in order, and in system, and day by day you will gain in power over the mental mechanism, just as the child does over the spinal marrow in walking, or the musician over the nerve centres. Aristotle somewhere says that the student who wins out in the fight must be slow in his movements, with voice deep, and slow speech,⁶⁸ and he will not be worried over trifles which make people speak in shrill tones and use rapid movements. Shut close in hour-tight compartments, with the mind directed intensely upon the subject in hand, you will acquire the capacity to do more and more, you will get into training; and once the mental habit is established, you are safe for life.

Concentration is an art of slow acquisition, but little by little the mind is accustomed to habits of slow eating and careful digestion, by which alone you escape the ‘mental dyspepsy’⁶⁹ so graphically described by Lowell in the *Fable for Critics*. Do not worry your brains about that bugbear Efficiency, which, sought consciously and with effort, is just one of those elusive qualities very apt to be missed. The man’s college output is never to be gauged at sight; all the world’s coarse thumb and finger may fail to plumb his most effective work,⁷⁰ the casting

65. *a master in Israel*: Osler compares William James to Sirach, one of the early scribes, who taught that “wisdom” refers to both practical matters and research in the scriptures and sciences. *The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach* (Ecclesiasticus 38:24–34; 39:1–11).

William James (1842–1910): American psychologist and philosopher. He taught anatomy, physiology, and hygiene, as well as psychology and philosophy, at Harvard University. He is known as one of the founders of pragmatism and also as the brother of the novelist Henry James (1843–1916).

66. William James, “The Gospel of Relaxation,” in *Selected Papers on Philosophy* (1917; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961), p. 31.

67. (German) “A talent forms itself in silence.” Goethe, *Torquato Tasso*, I, ii, 66.

68. Aristotle, *Physiognomonica* (Physiognomy), chaps. 2–3, 807a–b.

69. *mental dyspepsy*: Mental indigestion. James Russell Lowell, “A Fable for Critics,” line 106.

70. Robert Browning, “Rabbi Ben Ezra,” stanza 24, lines 1–2. This poem is warning young people not to be short-sighted in setting guidelines for living and goals for achievement.