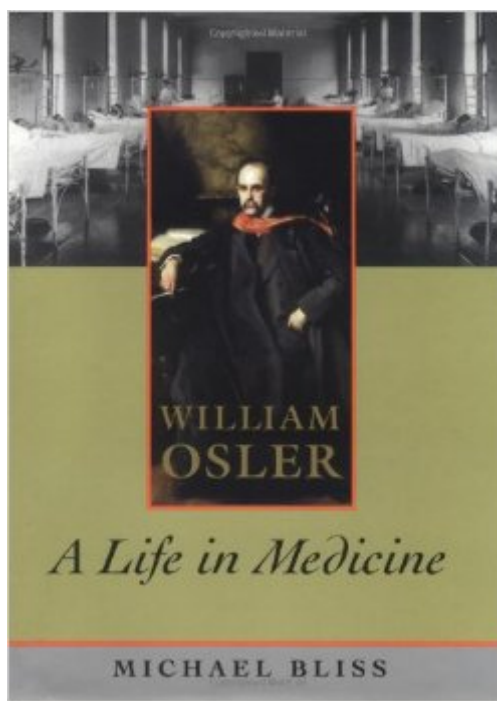


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William Osler: A Life In Medicine



Synopsis

William Osler was born in a parsonage in backwoods Canada on July 12, 1849. In a life lasting seventy years, he practiced, taught, and wrote about medicine at Canada's McGill University, America's Johns Hopkins University, and finally as Regius Professor at Oxford. At the time of his death in England in 1919, many considered him to be the greatest doctor in the world. Osler, who was a brilliant, innovative teacher and a scholar of the natural history of disease, revolutionized the art of practicing medicine at the bedside of his patients. He was idolized by two generations of medical students and practitioners for whom he came to personify the ideal doctor. But much more than a physician, Osler was a supremely intelligent humanist. In both his writings and his personal life, and through the prism of the tragedy of the Great War, he embodied the art of living. It was perhaps his legendary compassion that elevated his healing talents to an art form and attracted to his private practice students, colleagues, poets (Walt Whitman for example) politicians, royalty, and nameless ordinary people with extraordinary conditions. William Osler's life lucidly illuminates the times in which he lived. Indeed, this is a book not only about the evolution of modern medicine, the training of doctors, holism in medical thought, and the doctor-patient relationship, but also about humanism, Victorianism, the Great War, and much else. Meticulously researched, drawing on many new sources and offering new interpretations, *William Osler: A Life in Medicine* brings to life both a fascinating man and the formative age of twentieth-century medicine. It is a classic biography of a classic life, both authoritative and highly readable.

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Customer Reviews

William Osler remains an iconic figure in American medicine. Osler is taken often to epitomize the physician who brings a critical and scholarly approach to the bedside in conjunction with compassion and empathy. In this very well written biography, Bliss traces Osler's life, his achievements, and examines how he assumed iconic status and whether or not this status is deserved. Bliss is particularly well equipped to undertake this task. A well known specialist on Canadian history, he has written other fine books on medical history in a Canadian context. Bliss presents Osler as a product of the rising British Victorian middle classes. The remarkable son of impressive parents, Osler was the son of an English naval officer turned Anglican minister and his equally intelligent wife. Raised in rural Ontario when this part of Canada was still a frontier, Osler's parents inculcated respect for learning, dedication to hard work, and clearly taught the value of community service. William Osler was not an outlier in this family. One of his brothers became a prominent businessman and two other brothers became important figures in Canadian law and politics. An early interest in natural history (biology) led Osler to medicine. Trained in then provincial Toronto and Montreal, he finished his education in some of the great teaching hospitals of Europe. Spotted by his mentors in Montreal as a future star, he was brought back to McGill to teach at the modest medical school. At McGill, Osler launched the career of careful clinical observation, pathologic correlation, and teaching that would propel him to the apex of his profession. His growing reputation led to appointments at the University of Pennsylvania and then to the nascent Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

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