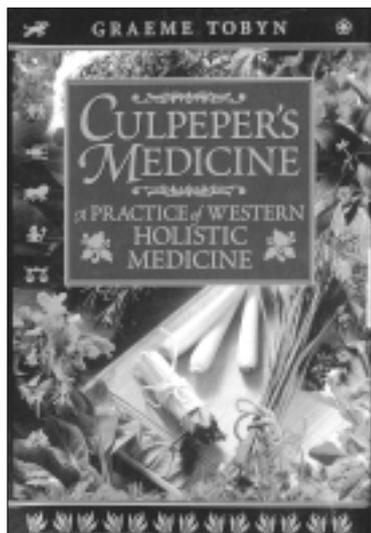


NEW TITLES

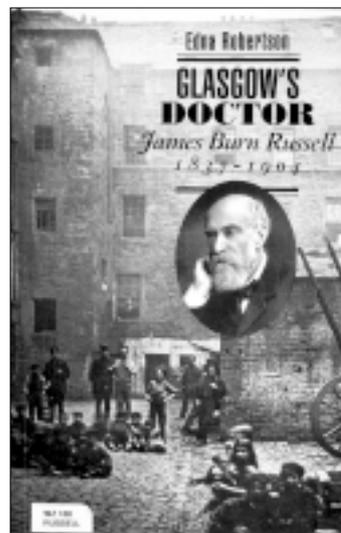


WH Freeman and Co: New York; 1999.
ISBN 1852309431

I had heard, as an undergraduate, of Culpeper, and so was interested to receive this book, a historical document of the seventeenth century apothecary, for review. Although it has little relevance for the practice of modern medicine, it serves as a useful primer to the beliefs of a sub-group of alternative health care practitioners who use herbalism and astrology. I found the experience of reading it similar to my first encounter with works of fiction like Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, or the modern children's game of Pokémon, in both of which a make-believe world is generated, including an unique fictional language and vocabulary. I have a concern in that Culpeper's practice is taken to be synonymous with 'holistic medicine' and there are frequent inferences that modern medicine cannot provide such an approach. This is over-simplistic; surely modern medicine can, and should, aspire to holistic care embracing psychological factors, family and social circumstances, lifestyle and prevention.

However, the text is well written, clear and easy to read with nicely drafted, informative illustrations and colour plates. As a primer to the beliefs of astrologists and herbalists, and the history of these disciplines, it is of value. I certainly understand much better now the concepts that underpin the medical applications of herbalism and astrology. The book is likely to be of most interest to patients who feel that modern medicine has failed them and to general practitioners, to help them understand the beliefs of that small sub-group of patients who believe passionately in this type of complementary medical practice.

Professor DJ Stott



Tuckwell Press: East Linton; 1998.
ISBN 1862320551

When James Burn Russell was born, Glasgow's population was 250,000 and comprised a series of independent Burghs which were under parochial rather than municipal administration. The rampant diseases at the time were cholera, typhus and typhoid with 5,000 typhus cases being treated in the Infirmary of Glasgow in 1837. Russell's own mother Agnes died from tuberculosis aged 22 when he was two years old.

Edna Robertson has produced a well researched account of the life of Russell, which was clearly coloured by his early life experiences. As a young man James was nearly lost at sea while assisting Lord Kelvin's transatlantic cable laying operations. As Glasgow's first full-time medical officer of health he was constantly working to rectify the appalling living conditions existing within Glasgow's Victorian slums. He became embroiled in controversy with slum land lords, reactionary town councillors and public apathy. Robertson's well-crafted account of the life and achievements of Russell gives a clear flavour of the medical structures of the time and of the social pressures which affect disease states.

James Burn Russell became internationally renowned and was a key player in the foundation of public health medicine. His determination and clear understanding of the needs of the general population resulted in astonishing improvements in the overall health of the Glasgow population. It is interesting to reflect that Glasgow still has a poor health record for many diseases which were not apparent or present during Russell's lifetime. How might he have 'attacked' the public health issues of today?

This book is required reading for anyone with an interest in the history of medicine, particularly those interested in public health medicine, for it shows what can be achieved by a dedicated individual. Edna Robertson has to be congratulated on an excellent account, which brings to life the man and his times.

Professor F Cockburn



Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2000.
ISBN 0198207875

Rob Houston is Professor of Early Modern History at the University of St Andrews. In this fascinating book he describes the means whereby individuals in eighteenth-century Scotland became designated as mentally incapable. The formal process was determined in civil court inquests concerning an individual's capacity to manage their own affairs. Commonly, a relative would raise a *brieve* (writ or brief) to claim that an individual was either *fatuous* (mentally incapable) or *furiosus* (insane). He also examines the relatively small number of insanity defences raised in criminal trials and augments this further from figures provided by private madhouses and public asylums. In so doing, Professor Houston captures the way Scottish society grappled with the problem of mental illness, particularly when it burst the bounds of family or social constraints and support, much in the same way as it does today. He recognises that in many cases mental illness is an entity and is sceptical of the writings of social theorists such as Foucault, who see it as a manifestation of intolerance by a sick society toward those who do not conform. Most of the cases described show the endeavour to be fair to the individuals, to protect them from themselves and from harm or to guard against injustice.

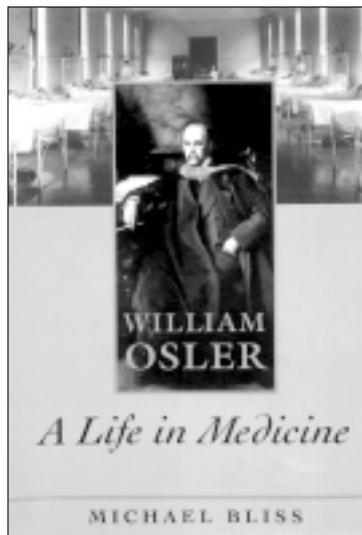
Inevitably, the focus is on the manifestations and consequences of mental illness rather than their development, but hypotheses about causation were in evidence and have a familiar ring. Stresses such as passions and unrequited love, alcohol inevitably, old age, and the puerperium were recognised causative phenomenon. For instance:

A married woman in Perth in a fit of lunacy, cut her throat. She had been delivered of her second child . . . but had been observed for 8 or 10 days past, to be rather low spirited, and to wish to go out alone. As she had on former occasions shown signs of derangement and had attempted to drown herself, her husband had taken care to keep the door locked, but she managed to get a razor and performed the fatal deed in so desperate a manner that all the aid of surgery was in vain.

Heredity was also important. Andrew Duncan described the characteristics of melancholy temperament. Cullen classified senile decay in his nosology. The views of physicians explaining the causes of mental illness became increasingly prominent as the eighteenth century advanced.

The involvement of doctors in assessing madness or idiocy becomes more evident towards the end of the eighteenth century. Debates about insanity were not seen as purely medical preserves. Many different dialogues existed in Scotland's main courts of the eighteenth century between lay jurors and judges, between lay witnesses and jurors, between medical practitioners and judges, between self-professed experts and lay people with widely differing experience of the deranged. Community, or more particularly family, care was the norm. Institutions were rare and conditions for the lunatic at large were often even worse than those in the small number of asylums or private homes for the insane. This scholarly book is required reading for medical historians but it also has broader appeal for all those concerned with the welfare of the mentally ill in Scotland.

Dr EB Ritson



Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1999.
ISBN 0195123468

William Osler was the most famous and influential physician of his time and even now, almost 100 years after his death, his memory remains alive. Those who have tried unsuccessfully to follow his life and work through Harvey Cushing's monumental and ponderous *Life of Osler* will welcome this new biography by Professor William Bliss who is a Professor of History at the University of Toronto.

Osler dominated medicine at the end of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth centuries. A clinician physician rather than a physician scientist, his sound, clear and dedicated approach to the practice of medicine served as an inspiration to his peers and many generations of students at the universities of McGill, Johns Hopkins and Oxford. Osler's clinical approach and teaching were founded on the use of pathology, he personally performed many hundreds of autopsies, and the microscope. In his early professional years it was through microscopy that he made significant discoveries in biology and veterinarian medicine. He never considered himself as a scientist but was always receptive to the many new scientific advances being made at the turn of the nineteenth century. Osler's three main interests were learning about the natural history of disease, teaching about the disease and treating it. His opposition to the indiscriminate use of drugs resulted in his being unfairly labelled as a therapeutic nihilist.

William Osler bustled through life with enormous energy, wisdom, charm and good humour. Bliss conveys very well the impact that Osler made on his staff, students and patients. Although very conscious of his own abilities he remained modest, often teaching from his own errors and quoting Kipling: '*But keep humble – lest we forget*'. Bliss brings to life the inspiration and excitement involved in the founding of the Johns Hopkins Hospital and School of Medicine, where the father figures were William Welch, William Halsted, Howard Kelly and in particular William Osler, who more than anyone made Johns Hopkins an outstanding medical school. In 1905 Osler took up the position of Regius Professor of Medicine at the University of Oxford, seeing the chair as a '*quiet, easy berth for a man whose best work is done*'. This was not to be. He remained as busy and energetic as ever for although he did less clinical

teaching his book collecting and study of medical bibliography became his major occupation.

What shines through this outstanding biography is Osler's love and enthusiasm for his profession. But the book is more than simply a life of Osler, for Bliss brings in many of the major medical figures in American, British and Continental medicine. It is well written, the pace does not flag and the biography is enlivened by personal reminiscences of colleagues and students. William Osler remains an inspirational figure in medicine. His life and times will be of interest to medical students and graduates of all disciplines. This is a biography which should not be missed.

Professor IAD Bouchier