

Charles S. Bryan (Editor). *Sir William Osler: An Encyclopedia*. xxii + 970 pp., illus., bibl., index. Novato, Calif.: Norman Publishing, 2020. \$125 (cloth); ISBN 9780930405915.

The name William Osler is familiar to most historians of medicine—and certainly to those with expertise in the English-speaking medical world from the nineteenth century onward. His emphasis on clinical teaching and the doctor–patient relationship, in addition to his myriad research interests, means that he intersected with an enormous number of fellow physicians. Using Osler as the cornerstone of an encyclopedia project, therefore, means an attempt at a type of snapshot of not only a career but an era of Anglophone medicine on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

In the book's foreword, editor Charles S. Bryan presents four guiding questions for the encyclopedia project: "(1) What was William Osler really like, and what did he do? (2) What did Osler write, and who influenced his thinking? (3) How has Osler been assessed over the century since his death in December 1919 from complications of pneumonia? (4) Does Osler still matter, and what would he tell us were he alive today?" (p. ix). While it would be incorrect to suggest that reference books lack arguments, it is rare to find one with such a clear sense of purpose. With 147 contributors and over 860 pages of entries, having this framework is essential to evaluating the project as a whole. The final question is the most difficult to articulate strongly from the encyclopedia's content; however, the appeal and utility of the text in the first place is an argument for Osler's continued importance.

Many of the entries that address these framing questions best are biographical. A substantial number of entries in the encyclopedia are biographies of Osler's students, mentors, colleagues, influences, and family members. While they vary in length, all are written through the Osler lens and directly emphasize connections. Individuals are initially identified by their relationship with Osler, what years they knew him, or what institutional homes they shared. For example, the entry on Joseph Hersey Pratt (1872–1956) begins by stating that he "was a member of the second class of the Johns Hopkins Medical School, where he became a devoted student of William Osler and his life-long disciple" (p. 652). Furthermore, for many of these entries subentries are added that specifically address how an individual remembered Osler. Pratt's includes selections from nine publications where he discussed his former professor (p. 653). This is a direct way of answering Questions 1 and 3. Most remembrances were written after Osler's death but address events of the late physician's life. This is not to say that the biographical entries are useful only as tools for learning about Osler. The major life events and achievements of these individuals are also included and provide a sense of what many Anglophone physicians were engaged with in the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. Other entries serve as short essays about Osler's views on specific topics or offer detailed discussions of specific periods of his life and research. For example, there are entries titled "Medical Records, William Osler and" and "Ontario Period of William Osler," both of which meet these criteria. Woven into other entries on individuals or specific publications, these portions of the text form an intellectual biography for the text's titular figure.

Most readers, however, will likely use *Sir William Osler: An Encyclopedia* as a reference, with specific sections in mind, rather than attempting to address or encounter the volume as a whole. For this purpose, the encyclopedia is clear and well formatted. The detailed chronology at the front of the book and the short professional biography of Osler himself create a useful foundation. Meanwhile, at the back of the text there are several other useful tools for researchers. The extensive bibliography is divided into sections, beginning with works by Osler himself (subdivided into a section of books and monographs and one of journal articles and book chapters), followed by secondary literature on Osler (again divided into subsections of books versus articles and chapters); the next offers abstracts of papers presented at American Osler Society meetings, and a final section lists secondary literature cited more than twice in the encyclopedia that does not primarily concern Osler or his circle. The book concludes with an extensive index of topics and individuals mentioned in the primary text.

While this is not a text that will make its way onto most individuals' shelves, it does serve as an important reference for the study of Osler and his time and will be useful for those who are interested in this period, especially with an eye to social networks and medical education. Unlike most compilers of reference texts, Bryan and his collaborators are forthright and clear about their perspective. The framing questions and the

use of Osler as the main historical figure through which we view the work serve to emphasize Osler's outsized impact on the history of medicine while keeping the book's purpose narrow.

Sarah E. Naramore

Sarah E. Naramore is a historian of American medicine and an assistant professor at Northwest Missouri State University. She is the author of Benjamin Rush, Civic Health, and Human Illness in the Early American Republic (Boydell & Brewer, 2023).