

SOME DOCTORS ON OSLER'S LATEST

What They Think of Death-Bed Visions.

DISAGREE WITH THE PROFESSOR

Toronto Physicians Say Those Who Are Conscious to the End Sometimes Pierce Veil.

Toronto, Dec. 21. — "As a rule, man dies as he has lived, undisturbed practically by the thought of a future life. The preacher was right—man hath no pre-eminence over the beast—as one dies, so doth the other."

This, with other extracts from Dr. William Osler's latest book, was cabled to Toronto yesterday, and before night, had the author been in this city, he would have heard some very vigorous dissent, coupled with sly references to his "absurd theory that man does his best work before 40."

Among Toronto's physicians is one who is ripe in years and experience. He has passed the allotted span of threescore years and ten, but his mind is as clear as at 20, and his broad charity tempers his judgment, though without impairing it.

Not Too Seriously. "I do not wish to take Dr. Osler's alleged statement too seriously," said this white-haired man, who in his day had moulded medical minds. "I hope there is some mistake. Of course, if he is reported correctly, I must say that his whimsicality has taken another form. Last time, you know, he wanted to chloroform men of 60. When I was in England some years ago, by the way, I met a noted writer and physician. He was 76 years old, and I was told that he was doing rather well. He was 'just getting into a good practice,' as my informant put it. I knew Osler, when he was a boy. He's a nice fellow. Regarding his cabled opinions, I shouldn't be surprised to learn at any time that he has modified these views. As you will remember, he did qualify his strictures on the unfortunate of 40 and over.

Dies as He Lives.

"I have seen many death-beds, and in the large majority of cases the dying man or woman has given thought to the future. To a certain extent, Dr. Osler is right when he says that a man dies as he lives. The man who lives a careless life may die a careless death, and a blatant unbeliever may cling to his disbelief, though there are exceptions. One was the thief on the cross. But if Dr. Osler really means that the future is not to be considered, he is wrong. When death is due to apoplexy, the brain functions may be suspended at once, and there may be no time for thought, but where a conviction of death precedes death itself, the beyond is not forgotten. I remember one death in particular. A woman of exemplary piety called her son to her side and said: 'My son, meet me in heaven; be sure.' Never shall I forget that countenance. There I saw the transfiguration. Trust in an unseen power illumined the face, but there was no forgetfulness of the life she was leaving. She held her boy's hand tightly, and looked into his eyes and soul. It may be that she was an old woman. I believe she did, but Dr. Osler present he would never have questioned human faith in an instance, and I have seen too many of the kind to believe that the majority of men and women look forward when the last moment comes. This being so, why should we scoff at what they see or think they see?"

"Some may say that visions are due to physical causes, to circulation, for example, but whatever the cause, they have the effect, and to me, there is only a delicate film between the present and future. There are thousands of authenticated cases of the eleventh hour, the occult. Why should we sneer at them? Why, indeed, should we speculate on the subject? Dr. Osler may not be familiar with the circumstances of the great St. Elizabeth's death. Stanley designated himself 'the eldest son' in London, but was converted to South Africa. Just before he breathed his last, he said to his wife, 'Don't weep; we shall meet again.' Was that a death of force? When Osler speaks of man dying as he lives, he may simply mean that man and beast alike quit this life, this vessel of clay. If he is in earnest, that there is no future, that man is an unfortunate, a tragic blunder. Still, I am sure that Dr. Osler will tell us very soon that the words attributed to him are not his at all, or that they are not properly understood. We must not forget, you know, that Dr. Osler says that, after all, he clings to Christianity."

A Disputed Point.

Another doctor was seen at St. Michael's Hospital. "It has long been a disputed point," said he, "and perhaps is generally true, as Dr. Osler says, that a man dies as he lives. If he has been thinking of going to Heaven he is anxious to get there, while if believing his destination was the other place he is often very much afraid at the last. I have seen—but not his at all, or that they are not properly understood. We must not forget, you know, that Dr. Osler says that, after all, he clings to Christianity."

For Young and Old.

The ideal medicine for children and aged persons is Angier's Emulsion. It is the kind physicians prescribe. It is pleasant to take, agrees with the stomach and regulates the bowels. It increases the desire for wholesome food, assists digestion and nourishes the body. Try a 50-cent bottle.

fever, pneumonia, diphtheria, and the like, the sufferer's body and brain are gradually poisoned, and he becomes unconscious some time before passing away. In such cases there are no visions. I have often thought it a merciful provision of Providence that death in these cases should be accompanied by so little pain of body or of mind. The dying one becomes gradually oblivious of his surroundings, and the anguish of parting from loved ones is not experienced.

In the more acute diseases, in tuberculosis especially, where the patient retains full possession of his senses right to the end, my experience has been different to that of Dr. Osler. Many who are Christians look forward to death and are ready to go to Heaven at any time they are called. These are the happiest of the dying. In such cases I have often seen patients go off into a dream just before death, and while they were in it their happy faces indicated that they were seeing something. When they awoke they would tell that they had been with loved ones in the other world, or had seen Jesus, or something to that effect. They were disappointed to wake up again in this world.

In other cases again I have seen the faces of people just crossing the bar light up with a holy joy, such that it made one almost envious of them. A moment before they were in full possession of all their senses, and so far as one could judge they were at the moment of the vision wide awake, their eyes seeming to pierce beyond the veil, they have related to me what they saw."

A Clergyman's View.

"A great many of the death-bed visions are nothing more nor less than hallucinations," said Rev. Dr. Perry, of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, for I have known in some cases, where there was an unexpected recovery, that the visions were forgotten, and the life not improved. But there are some which I cannot but believe are genuine. "A lady member of our church died recently. Her brother had passed away during her illness, and it had not been thought advisable to tell her of it. She was conscious right to the last. Just before she drew her last breath she raised herself slightly, held out her arms, her eyes and face beaming with pleasure, and exclaimed, 'Oh, Robert! Robert! What explanation can be given of that? What was she looking into the face of him who had gone before?'"

Among Bad Men.

"I have not come into contact with deathbeds for some years," said Dr. Murray McFarlane, but when I was in the west I saw death, generally in violent form. There were bad men in those days, and a bullet ended many a career. Dr. Osler may not be wrong when he says that man is too busily engaged in dying to see visions and to discuss the future, but I know this, that every man who has died in my presence has died without thinking that this ended all. I remember one man in particular. He was a gambler, but there was no taint as to what he had done. He was a right doctor, if all right, I have been a gambler, but I don't want to square one, and the good Lord won't throw me down."

I have had men ask me to hurry them, I am not afraid, doctor; just let me look into the vista, and without apprehension."

"I knew another man, who in health declared he was an atheist. 'If I should ever repent, it will be when I am not myself, when illness has weakened me, and weakened my mind,' he used to say, and in that time he was practically dead, he said, 'I am a talk with you, old man?' You know what you said to say about the soul and the hereafter. 'I know now that I am but a speck in the sand, a mere atom, and that there is much that I do not know, that we may know in the future the future will tell.'"

THE CHRISTMAS HOLLY

Was Used as a Shelter for Sylvan Spirits.

The sprigs of holly for the Christmas pudding, or the wreath that is purchased of the sidewalk vendor of the city streets, is quite as alluring and suggestive of coming delights to the city child as the wealth of glossy green and bright red berries gathered from the woods by the country child. The latter will have a better opportunity for studying the characteristics of the growing tree, and may accordingly take a more active interest in the study of their growth and development and of the various holly trees of other lands. Both the city and the country children will have one interest in common in the Christmas holly, however—prying into the legends and superstitions connected with the Christmas holly in the past.

The ancient Teutons hung up bunches of holly in their houses as a place of shelter for the sylvan spirits during the cold winter. It was natural therefore that when Christians began to decorate home and church for their religious festivals they should use the plants they had been accustomed to use for other purposes. It was, doubtless, a Christmas plant, and in an English country at least it is considered very unlucky to bring any holly into the house before Christmas Eve. Another curious superstition is found in the English counties of Worcestershire and Herefordshire, where a sprig of the holly of the church is carefully treasured up as sure to bring good luck during the ensuing year.

But not only in connection with Christmas decoration and plum pudding is the holly a potent plant, if the legends of the classics be to be believed. Pliny, the Roman historian and naturalist, tells us that when Christians first began to plant near dwelling places to protect them from lightning, the flowers of the plant caused its wood to freeze, and that if a staff of it fell short of touching it, the animal will be so subdued by its influence as to return and lie down by it. He is speaking of course of European holly, probably the American variety would not satisfy these difficult conditions.

It is only natural that such a plant should find a place in folk-medicine. In many districts of England the country people use you to thrash leaves, and they assure you that it is a perfect cure. But the plant does not seem to have medicinal virtues of the "black drink" which was used at the opening of the council of the Creek Indians. Another supplies the famous Mate, or Paraguay tea, which contains the same active principles as

tea and coffee, but not their volatile and empyreumatic oils.

An infusion of it has an agreeable and slightly aromatic odor, is rather bitter to the taste, and very refreshing and restorative to the human frame after enduring great fatigue. It is said that when a person has once become addicted to the use of it, he finds great difficulty in renouncing it. It is said also that the leaves of the European species are as efficacious as the Peruvian bark in intermittent fevers. The root and bark are known to have valuable active principles. But at present we are satisfied with that sprig stuck so jauntily in the crown of the Christmas pudding. Long may it wave there!

As to utilitarian virtues, the holly grows to a tree of some 40 feet in height, and a few evergreens are more valuable in the shrubbery, although of very slow growth. Both the European and American varieties form excellent hedges when carefully trimmed; and such a fence is decidedly of the "well-to-do" order.

One such hedge has become historic. It belonged to the pure-minded John Evelyn, and stood in his garden at Say's Court, Deptford, in England. When Peter the Great, of Russia, was working in the royal dockyard of Deptford, during his eccentric excursions into various European countries, he hired Evelyn's house, and he is said to have injured the hedge by having his servant wheel him back and forth through it for his amusement.

At the seat of the Earl of Haddington, at Tynningham, in Scotland, there were hedges of holly extending over a mile and a half, and varying in height from 10 to 25 feet, with a diameter of from 9 to 13 feet—P. W. Humphreys, in the Country Gentleman.

THE WHEAT CROP

What an Optimist Propheesies for the Western Farmer

So enormous is the crop of wheat and other grains in the Northwest this year that it is prophesied by a Regina optimist that before the snow is off the ground several of the farmers in the vicinity of Saskatchewan's diabolical will have a 40-horse power automobile, decorated or otherwise, by a French chauffeur. This is probably a little beyond hope, yet speaking seriously, the crop has been a godsend to the farming community, and the year will be one of mortgage-burning and debt-paying throughout the entire west. And in most cases there will be enough money left to decorate and beautify the homes of the men, once pioneers, but now comfortable farmers. That the decorations will be tasty need not be said, for the westerners know a good thing when they see it, and reason the sale of the Gourlay piano in the Northwest this year has been enormously large. The whole country from Winnipeg west to the Rockies, and even beyond the mountains, seems to have a thorough knowledge of the musical value of the Gourlay, and orders are coming in constantly. The Gourlay piano is higher in price than some of its competitors, but that is due to more care in the building, and the enhanced value of the piano thereby. Customers have been expressing their delight to the firm, but better than that, they have been showing the tasteful interest. That is the reason why a carload of Gourlays left Toronto the other day for Winnipeg, where they will be distributed to the various purchasers. Mrs. (Rev.) R. McNair, formerly a piano and voice teacher of high reputation in Western Ontario, an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal College and Royal Academy of Music in London, has now moved to Regina, and since taking up her abode in the west purchased a Gourlay piano. Her husband, writing to the firm concerning the instrument, says: "Mrs. McNair has an intimate and extensive knowledge of all the best makes of pianos, and after a thorough trial, places yours first among the Canadian-made instruments. We are delighted with it."

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Good Going December 29.

And returning up to and including Jan. 7, are the tickets for the Windsor Shore New York excursion from Suspension Bridge or Buffalo on above date (Dec. 29): \$25.00, round trip, and full particulars from Louis Drago, Canadian Passenger Agent, 69½ Yonge Street, Toronto, Ont.

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