

Book Reviews

Catalogue of Western Manuscripts on Medicine and Science in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library. I: MSS. written before A.D. 1650, by S. A. J. MOORAT, London, The Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1962, pp. vii, 679, col. front., £10 10s., \$30.00.

Since its opening to the public in 1949, the Wellcome Historical Medical Library has rendered incalculable service to students of Medical History and in related fields. For the first five years no catalogue was available in print for any part of the collections. Since then we have been given the Catalogue of the Incunabula (1954) and, six years later, that of the Books printed before 1641—both superb specimens of bibliography prepared by F. N. L. Poynter, the Chief Librarian. This has now been supplemented by the Catalogue of the Earlier Manuscripts, undoubtedly the outstanding and unparalleled treasure of the Library. The book in itself forms a landmark in medical historical bibliography, a piece of work that deserves the highest admiration, owing to its thoroughness and the scholarship which informed its preparation. It is here that the scholar will find his first guide and key to a multitude of sources yet unopened and promising magnificent reward. He is given a full collation of each individual manuscript including incipits, watermarks, illustrations, all conceivable palaeographical detail and provenance. Finally, the significance of each manuscript is assessed by comparison with the material already known and printed. Nobody can blame the author for having restricted information in the latter task in order to keep his work in reasonable limits of space and time. He thus relies for the Surgery of Mesue (493) on the short précis in Gurlt's *Geschichte der Chirurgie* instead of the first and only edition by Julius Pagel (1851–1912), the real pioneer in the whole field of medieval medicine and surgery and the revival of the sources many of which were his discoveries (see: Pagel, J. L., *Die angebliche Chirurgie des Johannes Mesue jun.* Berlin, 1893). Similarly his *editio princeps* (1891) of William of Congenis (799), has not been mentioned in favour of a later edition. In the account of the *Book of the Holy Trinity*—excellent as it is especially regarding the illustrative tradition—(164) a reference to the classical work of W. Ganzenmüller may have been useful (*Archiv f. Kulturgeschichte* 1939, 29, 93; reprinted in *Beiträge z. Geschichte d. Technol. und Alchemie* Weinheim 1956, pp. 231–72). A holograph-case book of Thomas Willis (799A) dating from the time of his association with the Oxford scientific group which notably included Boyle is given a tantalisingly brief entry. These are a few examples of what may well be regarded as falling outside the scope of a mere *Catalogue*: this has to guide the scholar and to whet his appetite by generous hints rather than a full presentation of the material. Indeed this has been accomplished by the author in full measure.

No more than a few words can be given to individual treasures described in the book under review. We have already mentioned medieval surgery—it includes the great Lanfrancus Manuscript (397) and the famous English Mondeville (564) from the Library of the late Dr. J. F. Payne. No less than 38 *Miscellanea Medica* (from the 13th to the 15th centuries) with an unparalleled wealth of Salernitan, Arabic, Arnaldian and Lullian sources are matched by 37 *Miscellanea Alchemica*, and also other Lullian manuscripts described on ten pages. There are also interesting *Paracelsica* including a German version of the Basle Lecture Notes (No. 593)—Bodenstein's *Libri Quinque* on Diseases *ex Tartaro*, published Basle, 1563. This is a work different from the later *Buch von den Tartarischen Krankheiten* (of the *Kärnten Trilogy*). The latter is not a 'German edition of this work', i.e. of No. 593, with a different text; nor is the 1563 book a 'Latin translation' of No. 593, but rather its original text. Of famous

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treasures there is only room to mention the Isaacus Judaeus Manuscripts (369 *et seq.*), the oldest of the manuscripts, an Anglo-Saxon codex of c. A.D. 1025 (No. 46) and finally the magnificent *Apocalypse* (49 of c. A.D. 1420) which was studied by the late Fritz Saxl (see his classical account with two excellent appendices by Otto Kurz, one of which deals with the famous five-picture-series of medical illustrations in *J. Warburg Institute* 1942, V, 82–142).

Our note, of necessity brief and inadequate, cannot conclude without according particular praise to the whole organization of the work including its multitude of cross references and in particular the indices. There are eleven of them: according to dates, languages, scribes, illustrations, special bindings, previous owners including libraries, bookplates, lecture notes, subjects. Indeed it would be very difficult to find anything comparable among 'Books about Books'.

WALTER PAGEL

Early American Medical Imprints. A Guide to Works Printed in the United States 1668–1820, by ROBERT B. AUSTIN, Washington, D.C., National Library of Medicine, 1961, pp. 240, \$1.00.

This very much needed work sets out to include every medical work, interpreted in its widest sense, even some material pertaining to veterinary medicine, vital statistics and medical legislation, although, as the author declares in his introduction to the book it is not intended to be exhaustive in these latter subjects. The imprints described are books, pamphlets, theses and broadsides, and thirty-six periodical titles taken from Ebert's paper on medical periodicals printed before 1821.

The book is arranged in alphabetical order with the author's name, title, place of printing, printer and date of publication. Added to this is a short description with number of pages and size. The number given to these imprints in the *American Bibliography* by Charles Evans is also included and, furthermore, references to the location of copies in American libraries is given. A total of 2,106 imprints appear in this monograph which is supplemented by a chronological index which only gives the year and number of entries.

To the considerable number of years that Mr. Austin put into his work should be added the eager collaboration given to him by many friendly institutions in the United States which, traditionally, have been opening their repositories to the search of the scholars. This work, no doubt, is going to make much easier for medical librarians the checking and cataloguing of material pertaining to two important periods in American history, the colonial century and the early years of independence when medical literature took a very radical turn. The alphabetical arrangement may be useful in routine library procedures but, from the historical point of view, a chronological presentation of the material might possibly have been more interesting, giving, in the eyes of the historian, a better shaping of medical ideas through the years. It is regrettable that the author, from the beginning of his research, made clear his intention of omitting the medical material appearing in almanacs and general newspapers which actually contain more genuine American medicine and unique information regarding the knowledge and practice of medicine, at least during the colonial period. Furthermore, only an exhaustive search through the medical legislation of the early colonies could fulfil the needs of medical bibliography in these periods. Despite the limited scope of the guide, now published by the National Library of Medicine, this monograph, which is the crowning work of Mr. Austin's thirty-five years as cataloguer of that library, is bound to be a very important tool in American bibliography, and will increase even more the interest in medical Americana.

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