

Book Reviews

This is the kind of book which is given to a doctor, whether he is a gynaecologist or not, or to a midwife, particularly a midwifery teacher, for a birthday or Christmas present, and so it should have had a richer binding and more illustrations. An additional five or seven shillings on the price would not have deterred this class of purchaser and it would have made a much more attractive and durable volume.

Such a book should have a large circulation. It is very likely to cause the reader to become keen on obstetric history and in any case it is a convenient reference book for one not too deeply involved in medical history. The index is quite good.

ALISTAIR GUNN

Boec van Medicinen in Dietsche: een Middelnederlandse Compilatie van medisch-farmaceutische Literatuur, ed. by W. F. DAEMS (*Janus*, supplements, vol. vii), Leiden, Brill, 1967, pp. 361, 60 guilders.

The reading of this excellent edition of a Middle Netherlandish medical text makes one wish that we had in England a few comparable scholars to deal with vernacular English texts that contain similar material. Dr. Daems elicits so much information from this apparently anonymous compilation that one feels how valuable would be the results from the application of the same techniques to our own medieval books.

The book is concerned, apart from editing the text, with a discussion of the author and copyist of the manuscript, the sources from which the material has been derived, the pharmacy and materia medica, and a glossary of plant names. Although a Brother Thomas and Brother Aernt, both connected with the Franciscans, are mentioned in the first half of the manuscript, the exact identification of either cannot be fixed owing to the lack of documentary evidence, though Dr. Daems suggests some possibilities. On the sources of the book we are on firmer ground and it is in this section of his study that the editor shows his undoubted expertise, analysing systematically the teaching on uroscopy, herbals, diseases, Galenic pharmacy, gynaecological and obstetrical matters, Platearius' glosses on the *antidotarium* and regimen. This section is extremely valuable. The next part on pharmacy deals with the raw materials (animal, mineral and vegetable,) their preparation and the different forms in which they were administered. This is followed by an examination of the plant names and their possible identification, with a list of synonyms gathered from manuscript and published material, a difficult but important contribution. The work closes with various indexes, biographical notices and an extensive bibliography, a model of its kind and a tribute to its author.

In such a book, containing a wealth of detail, some misprints are to be expected, but it is surprising how few there are, and I mention the following, not as a criticism, but for the sake of completeness: p. 32, *propositum*; p. 36, *simplicia*; p. 40, *prope*; p. 43, *consueuerunt*; p. 43, *comburatur odor*; p. 47, *Petri hyspani*; p. 52, *prospera*; p. 63, *Index Sermonum*.

Dr. Daems is to be congratulated on his achievement, which should be an encouragement and stimulus to others to engage in the same kind of studies. This is the kind of book we need if our knowledge of medieval medicine is to be enlarged.

C. H. TALBOT