

Book Reviews

ANTONIA J. BUNCH, *Hospital and medical libraries in Scotland. An historical and sociological study*, Glasgow, Scottish Library Association, 1975, 8vo, pp. xii, 186, illus., £8.00.

The author is concerned to trace the origins of collections of medical books from their earliest appearance to the present day in all Scottish hospital and medical libraries, together with significant collections in non-medical libraries. Modern, veterinary and pharmaceutical libraries have been excluded. Her task has been limited by the small amount of research that has been carried out on her topic, and although she has analysed carefully the libraries of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, a great deal of this type of investigation remains to be done. The present book is, therefore, an introduction to future studies by Miss Bunch, and hopefully by others.

First of all, medical books in Scottish libraries to the end of the sixteenth century are surveyed. The most outstanding medieval collection was that of William Schevez, Archbishop of St. Andrews (d. 1497). St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh universities are briefly discussed, and then the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, the library of which was the first solely medical library in Scotland, founded in 1681. The library of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh began in 1696, and that of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow in 1698. Six medical society libraries have existed in Edinburgh at one time or another, and Glasgow and Aberdeen have similar collections. The National Library of Scotland and the Signet Library in Edinburgh as well as others must also be included. The private collectors likewise deserve consideration and individuals like James Douglas, Alexander Monro *primus*, William Smellie, William Hunter, and Robert Wall, who are all principally of the eighteenth century, are representatives. Libraries in hospitals are also considered, and the author devotes a chapter to those in lunatic asylums. More recent developments in the present century conclude the survey. Finally there is an excellent critical bibliography, keyed to the text.

Miss Bunch has provided a short, but thorough, introductory treatise to an important topic. It can be strongly recommended to medical librarians, bibliographers and historians of medicine as a well-researched and authoritative work. We can now look forward to her further contributions.

KARL HEINZ BURMEISTER, *Achilles Pirmin Gasser (1505–1577) Arzt und Naturforscher Historiker und Humanist, Briefwechsel*, Wiesbaden, Guido Pressler, 1975, vol. 3, 8vo, pp. xiv, 546, illus., DM.260.

In 1970 Burmeister published a two-volume biography of Gasser which was reviewed in this journal (*Med. Hist.*, 1974, 18: 105). He collected together the meagre amount of bio-bibliographical information available, believing, justifiably, that for a full understanding of any period a knowledge of the minor, as well as the major, figures is essential. Gasser was a typical Renaissance humanist, but is little known. He indulged in medicine primarily, but also practised astrology, astronomy, botany, geography, history and philology, writing prolifically on all these subjects. He practised medicine in Lindau, Feldkirch, and finally Augsburg, and during his life kept up a lively correspondence with the learned men of his day. This book contains his letters and letters sent to him. There are 168 altogether, from 1532 to 1577, and each is given in its original

Book Reviews

Latin with a translation into German. There are annotations and a name index. During the five years since the first two volumes were published, Burmeister has discovered additional biographical data and this he reports in the introduction.

By means of these letters we can learn a lot about Gasser, about his correspondents and about contemporary events. Some have no medical or scientific interest but those to and from Vesalius (1557) discussing technical matters are of special interest, although they are both in English (C.D. O'Malley, *Andreas Vesalius of Brussels 1514–1564*, Berkeley, 1964, pp. 406–407 and 395–396), a fact to which Burmeister does not refer. Gasser's correspondence with Konrad Gessner (from 1554 to 1565) is also to be specially noticed.

As in his bio-bibliography, the author presents the data without comment and does not discuss Gasser's thoughts or those of contemporaries in the context of the times. Nevertheless he makes a scholarly contribution to the Renaissance studies in general and to medicine of the sixteenth century in particular. Others will be able to use this impeccable material in wider-ranging surveys of Renaissance medicine and science.

BASIL CLARKE, *Mental disorders in earlier Britain. Exploratory studies*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. xii, 335, illus., £10.

In this book the author discusses the conceptualization, the status, the form and the treatment of mental disease from the Romano-British period to the seventeenth century. It is by no means a complete survey, owing to the small amount of work that has been carried out on the available historical materials by historians, and this explains the paucity of reliable data and interpretations. Dr. Clarke considers his work to be but an introduction to the future research that is urgently needed.

He begins by comparing earlier British attitudes towards mental disorder and ideas of treatment with those in present-day societies, thus employing the same technique as used when modern primitive medicine is equated with palaeo-medicine. By this method he achieves a broader context in terms of social philosophy and place, and this balances the specific detail that constitutes the ensuing chapters. Mental disorder in the Celtic societies of Britain and among the Anglo-Saxons is dealt with, but information here is mostly insufficient and unreliable. Nevertheless mental disorder in its setting can be discussed at some length, with reference to legal implications, environmental problems, popular concepts and hospital facilities. Medieval medicine and mental illness, with reference to the opinions of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, Bernard de Gordon, John of Gaddesden, John Mirfield and John Arderne, are next dealt with, followed by a chapter on 'Popular containment of mental disorder'.

After these more general discussions, the author describes individual cases of mental disease, for example, a twelfth- and a late fifteenth-century series reported by patients at shrines in London. For the medical reader these are of especial interest, as are the cases of Henry VI who had a psychotic illness, and of his grandfather Charles VI of France. Changes in opinion concerning mental disease began in the early sixteenth century and continued into the next, due to a decline in the influence of Greek medical theory as enunciated by Galen and the beginnings of the Scientific Revolution. However, popular concepts, customs, cults and beliefs altered little. Dr. Clarke surveys