

Book Reviews

Doctors Monro, by R. E. WRIGHT-ST. CLAIR, London, Wellcome Historical Medical Library, Historical Monograph No. 4, 1964, pp. 190, 30s.

The familiar story of the three Alexander Monros who, each in succession over a period of a hundred and twenty-six years, held the Chair of Anatomy in the University of Edinburgh, has often been related. But this little book goes further, and meets a definite need by giving a clear account of the entire dynasty of the Monros, and tracing the family from Sir Alexander Monro of Bearcrofts, Stirlingshire, who was born in 1629, right down to the present day through eight generations in which are included no less than sixteen doctors. It is singularly appropriate that this detailed and well-documented study of the Monros should have been undertaken by Dr. Wright-St. Clair, of Hamilton, New Zealand, because the Monro Collection of Books and Manuscripts, now in the University of Otago at Dunedin, was bequeathed by Professor Alexander Monro *tertius* to his fourth son, Dr. David Monro. David emigrated to New Zealand in 1842, and after a distinguished political career there became Speaker in the House of Representatives, and was knighted in 1866. The author has made a careful study, not only of this Collection, but also of many other sources of information relating to the Monro family, in Edinburgh and elsewhere.

The original project of founding a Medical School in Edinburgh similar to that of Leyden arose in the mind of John Monro in 1694 after his return from Leyden, where he had studied under Boerhaave, and he made his son Alexander the instrument for carrying out his ambitious plan. The administrative success of this son, Monro *primus*, the still greater achievements of Monro *secundus* and the misfortunes of Monro *tertius* are all depicted by the author, who clarifies some misconceptions regarding the trio, and proceeds to tell us of the careers of Dr. George Monro, Physician-General of the garrison at Minorca; of Dr. Donald Monro, Physician to St. Georges Hospital, London; and in more recent times of the justly popular Major-General D. C. Monro, whom some of us remember as a well-loved army surgeon who did splendid work in both world wars. The book, which contains eight fine portraits, also appendices on Chronology, Portraits, Publications and Family Tree, concludes with a bibliography and adequate index.

DOUGLAS GUTHRIE

Isidore of Seville: The Medical Writings, by WILLIAM D. SHARPE, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, 54, part 2, 1964, pp. 75, \$2.50.

Dr. Sharpe has done his fellow-students of the history of medicine a great service by translating and annotating the medical sections of Isidore's great encyclopaedia. Though his introduction gets off to a shaky start, it soon gets into its stride and deals extremely well with the early medical literature on which Isidore must have based his knowledge. Unlike a great number of writers who deal with the 'dark' period of Western medicine, Dr. Sharpe shows a great understanding of and sympathy with the efforts made during those troubled times and he has not confined himself exclusively to the purely medical authors, but has examined also the views of the Western Fathers. The actual texts of Isidore, which were widely spread throughout the Middle Ages and formed the basis of a great deal that goes under the name of 'monastic medicine', have been excellently translated; but the most valuable part, and one on which Dr. Sharpe must have spent much labour, is the copious annotation which accompanies the translation. Not less valuable and interesting are the five appendices which deal with the pulse, frenesis, iliac passion, plague and undulant fevers. There is a full bibliography and a very good index.

C. H. TALBOT