

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