

## Book Reviews

everyone knows about, gastric acid, on ferments which may play a role in protein digestion, on the cells which provide the lining of the stomach, and on that remarkable substance still known only as the “intrinsic factor”, which is vital for the absorption from the intestine of the microgram quantities of the vitamin, B 12, which is necessary to prevent us developing Addisonian pernicious anaemia.

Horace Davenport’s book is a work of devotion and admirable scholarship. At the end of it all, however, I still do not know why the stomach secretes acid in such quantities. We do not really need it, as is shown by the many individuals who live to great ages without having any acid in their stomachs. Could it be that like the appendix, which we can all do without, stomach acid is vestigial in a biochemical sense? The answer to this question cannot be found in this book. Nevertheless, it does provide a fascinating insight into the ways of thought of generations of physiologists who have been, like Horace Davenport, committed to the ideal that “the proper aim of physiological research is to reach an understanding of normal and abnormal function in the human being”.

Christopher Booth, Royal College of Physicians of London

OVE HAGELIN (comp.), *Rare and important medical books in the library of the Karolinska Institute*, Stockholm, Karolinska Institutet Bibliotek, 1992, pp. 212, illus., SEK 400 (91–88194–027).

Third in a uniform series of catalogues compiled by Hagelin, this is the first to deal with the impressive rare book collection held by the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. Earlier volumes (noticed in this journal, 1990, 34: 470, and 1992, 36: 240) presented highlights from the library of the Swedish Society of Medicine, many of whose older books strayed to the Karolinska Institute after 1816, when the latter left the premises it had shared for its first six years with the Society and the Collegium Medicum. Further moves and some splendid donations apart, the subsequent history of the Karolinska collection is presented in Hagelin’s informative preface as one of more or less beneficent neglect; no catalogue has appeared since those of Anders Johan Hagströmer (1753–1830) in 1811 and 1825. Faced with two kilometres of pre-1960 books arranged only by subject, Hagelin has bestowed a bibliographical kiss of life on just 93 sleeping beauties, chosen for their historical importance and visual appeal—excellent illustrations accompany each record. Only works not previously catalogued for the Swedish Society of Medicine have been included, so the result is too unbalanced to stand alone as a survey of the literature, but here we find, amongst others, the well-established classics by Vesalius, Bidloo, Gautier d’Agoty, and Cruveilhier, and particularly fine copies of Charles Estienne’s anatomical atlas (1545), Hans Weigel the Elder’s Vesalian fugitive sheets (1556), and Georg Bartisch’s comprehensive ophthalmological treatise (1583). The arrangement is roughly chronological, ending with Fleming’s announcement of the discovery of penicillin in the *British Journal of experimental Pathology* (1929).

After giving the author and short title, each record has a brief pagination statement which occasionally alerts the careful reader to a copy-specific imperfection. Information about the author, his (or in the case of *Notes on nursing*, her) work, and the provenance of the Karolinska copy is then combined to produce a short essay supported by a list of references. Typographically challenged—even the commonest French and German accents are absent—and with a few harmless lapses in the English idiom, these essays are nevertheless reasonably informative and thoroughly entertaining. They convey the compiler’s enthusiasm for his subject. Even the most familiar territory is covered with a sharp eye for significant detail, and a fine balance is maintained between the grotesque or amusing anecdote, that necessary bane of so much popular literature on medical history, and the telling observation that preserves our sense of wonder at the human achievement each book represents.

Gerald Beasley, Wellcome Institute

JEREMY TAYLOR, *Hospital and asylum architecture in England 1840–1914: building for health care*, London, Mansell Publishing, 1991, pp. xiv, 274, illus., £60 (0–7201–2059–4).

The hospital building is a Cinderella to both medical and architectural history. Orthodox medical historians may be interested in, say, the finance of the institution and the therapy practised there; few architectural historians have yet looked at the architectural merit—or otherwise—of the buildings in which medicine is practised. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, in his brief survey of hospital architecture which