BOOK REVIEW

THREE MANUSCRIPT CATALOGUES


Codices 545–63 in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow are almost entirely astronomical, and the detailed descriptions of these manuscripts occupy a substantial part of the third volume of the definitive catalogue being prepared by the library staff. In the astronomical parts they have been assisted by Jerzy Dobrzycki. The present volume is more thorough, but not yet as extensive as the catalogue of astronomical manuscripts prepared by Grazyna Rosinska in Studia Copernicana, xxi; in any event, to see the physical descriptions of an entire volume or to have all the various parts of a manuscript listed together rather than separated out by individual titles, this series must be used.

The remarkable collection of scientific books brought together by Bern Dibner at the Burndy Library in Connecticut and now at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., is comparatively well-known, but some of the items in the associated manuscript collection may well surprise historians of science. Included are signed letters or manuscripts from Regiomontanus, Johann Virdung, Cyprian Leovitus, Kaspar Peucer, Tycho Brahe, Pierre Gassendi (to Bullialdus), and Galileo (to Peiresc). Among more recent astronomers represented are Messier, LeMonnier, Maskelyne, William Herschel, Bode, Encke, John Herschel (35 letters), Flammarion, Pickering, Lowell, Hale and Ritchey. While some of these are the sort simply collected for the sake of an autograph, others are clearly useful for the history of science. Surely the 99 items from Ernst Mach cannot be ignored!

The catalogue of the Brera Observatory in Milan describes individually (generally with a one-sentence abstract) 1333 letters of the eighteenth century. There are particularly large groups to and from Roger Boscovich (who came to Milan in 1770) and Barnaba Oriani (who came to the Brera in 1776). The volume concludes with brief biographical sketches of the correspondents. This