

Dr Munk, Harveian Librarian: the First Period

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The additions to the Library made by the Committee in 1845 meant that at last the effort of 1828 to make a modern medical library in the College came to fruition. Of the prime movers, Peter Mere Latham, who had been the principal, was now 57, Francis Hawkins 52 and Bisset Hawkins 50. Of the other members of the 1846 Committee, Watson was 54, and had been Goulstonian Lecturer in 1827, so it was odd that he had not been on the first one: he was certainly sympathetic to modern ideas all his life. Bright was not a Fellow until 1832; he was now 57, but he was one of the creators of modern medicine. Burrows was 45, and although not a research worker, he was up to date, and had the advantage of being the son of a powerful revolutionary; he also gave the Goulstonian Lecture in 1834. Copland was 55, but an enthusiast for medical literature: he found it impossible to build up a practice in London without hospital posts or friends, so he took to writing and produced a *Dictionary of Practical Medicine*, said to be the largest medical book ever written by a single person, comparable only to Rhazes's *Continens*. Norman Moore said 'Our own time, wiser than the centuries which succeeded Al Rhasis, leaves Copland's dictionary as undisturbed on the shelves as the "Continent" itself' (*Dictionary of National Biography*, 12, 171). But he was the first person to describe the use of potassium iodide in syphilis, and he was much honoured by the College of Physicians. Todd was the youngest of the Committee, aged 37, a devotee of physical examination, of everything new in medicine, a great physiologist, a great administrator, and a fighter for the supportive rather than the depletive treatment. Robert Nairn, who was 42, was probably not a reformer: he was reserved, cautious and a stickler for etiquette, and spent most of his life as a Commissioner in Lunacy. So it came about that three of the men who had been of the younger generation in 1828, supported by their immediate successors, won the day in 1846, and it is pleasant that the leader, on both occasions, was the same man, P. M. Latham, who was not only an obviously great man, but was, on a reading between the lines of Munk, a most estimable one.

Dr Ayerton Paris was President (he had succeeded Halford in 1844), Dr Hawkins was still Registrar and Librarian, and Mr Sedgwick Bedell and 'Librarian'. Mr Sedgwick was voted, in 1848 (*Annals*, 24, f. 192) 'fifty guineas for services exceeding his ordinary duties', unspecified: the Library had not been noted as unusually active lately, and the sorting and selling of duplicates had been completed by his predecessor. He resigned in December of that year, and was succeeded by Mr Saxe Bannister, MA, after 20 years of meritorious service. He was given the usual present of books. His successor was not so fortunate: in spite of his degree it was resolved on 25th March 1850 'that Mr Bannister be not retained as Bedell', and Mr Robert Lancaster Rawes was appointed (*Annals*, 24, f. 257).

In spite of the decision in 1846 to improve the Library, there is no evidence of actual expenditure to that end until 1849, by which time a balance on the account of £209 had been accumulated (*Annals*, 24, f. 238). In 1849, £38 were spent. The next expenditure was £88 in 1851 and another £42 in 1853. There is no evidence that the Fellows were giving to any extent the books 'listed as required'. Between 1850 and 1857, 334 books, in considerably more volumes, were given to the Library. Of these, 284 were medical, including several volumes from the Medico-chirurgical College of Philadelphia (*Annals*, 24, f. 254). About 50 were non-medical: it is not easy to separate them exactly. Among the not strictly medical ones are included *A plan for diverting London Sewage* in 1850, in the middle of the controversy which began in the twenties and ended with the Prince of Wales opening the completed works by Bazalgette and Forster, and it is interesting to find the College taking notice of it so early. That it continued to be so will appear in its proper place. The *Catalogue of the London Library*, given in 1852, the successive reports of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and *The Birth and Pilgrimage of Thought* added variety. So did a treatise in Chinese and one on Elective Franchise in 1853. A Celsus which had belonged to Prince Talleyrand was unexpected; it had also belonged to Matthew Baillie: it was an edition of 1776. In April 1855 Dr William Munk, who had been made a Fellow in 1854, gave the first volume of his *Roll of the College of Physicians*, a manuscript compilation, not originally intended for publication, but for the use of the Fellows. In December of the same year he gave the second volume, and was given a well-merited vote of thanks. In 1856 a medical book was given by Prince Albert (*Annals*, 25, f. 24). In 1855 the Library, which had been uninsured since 1826, was again insured, with the London Assurance and County Fire Office, for £2,000, the same sum as in 1825 ('Treasurer's Memoranda', pp. 70 and 71).

On 30th September 1856 the Registrar and Dr Munk, who had been commissioned by the President to consider 'the revision of the Library', reported that the Small Library, or Reading Room, contained about 3,000 volumes, cyclopedias, dictionaries and periodicals, which had been scattered, but had now been collected into consecutive cases, with a separate key. The modern works had

been classified according to language, and those most likely to be used had been moved to the Reading Room. This is the first mention of the Reading Room as 'the Small Library'. In the Large Library, the most valuable part had been examined, arranged and given new pressmarks: these 'comprised about two thousand volumes left by the Marquess of Dorchester, largely works on canon and civil law and patristic theology; and by Dr Richard Hale, several of the earliest, best and rarest editions of the Classics'. The Dorchester bindings were in a damaged and unsafe state: those of Dr Hale were a little better, but would be the more profitably repaired first with what funds the College could sanction. The books were overcrowded, and so tight that the bindings were being damaged: additional space was urgently required. A new catalogue was in course of preparation: the part comprising the most used books, in the Reading Room, was ready (*Annals*, 25, ff. 245-248).

No action or comment was made as an immediate result, but at the next Comitia, under the heading 'Arrangement for the Care of the Library', there is indirect evidence for what certainly happened: the appointment of Dr William Munk as Harveian Librarian, a major landmark in the history of the Library, the end of one era and the beginning of another.

Dr Munk's appointment, which turned out to be one of the most important events in the history of the Library, is not specifically mentioned in the *Annals*. The records are very strange. There is no doubt about the fact: his official biography in the *Roll*, and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, agree that it happened in 1857: the *College List* for 1856 does not mention it, but that for 1857 calls him 'Harveian Librarian' (it is presumably official, but as so often happens in a case where everything ought to be in order, nothing is; the Censors' Board gave its imprimatur to the *List* on the 18th July 1857, but did not meet on that or any other near date). The evidence in the *Annals* is that on 22nd December 1856 Dr Webster gave notice of motion, and Dr Nairne seconded, 'that an annual gratuity should be given to the Registrar in lieu of the Harveian Librarianship' (*Annals* 25, f. 263). This was confirmed on 6th April 1857, not as a minute, but as an afterthought, inserted on the verso of the preceding folio, opposite f. 279: 'It was proposed, pursuant to notice given at the last Comitia Majora Ordinaria and Resolved, that a Gratuity, in lieu of and to the amount of the Harveian Librarianship, should be granted to the present Registrar'. This was altered to 'the amount of the salary of the Harveian Librarian', a change not licensed by the original motion, and one that might have caused trouble when the salary was altered in 1861. It looks as though the feelings of Dr Hawkins, who was Registrar and Librarian, had been terribly injured by the appointment, and he could not bring himself to record it in the *Annals*. This is confirmed by a minute on the very last page that Dr Hawkins wrote, concerning the election of a Charter Committee, 'It was at first ['at first' was added subsequently] resolved that twelve of the Fellows should be appointed, but Dr Munk having been added, by the



Dr William Munk, by The Hon. John Collier, 1898. (Reproduced by permission of the Treasurer, Royal College of Physicians.)

President to the College Officers, it should be eleven'. (The President was Dr Thomas Mayo, who succeeded Dr Ayrton Paris who died in December 1855. Mayo was a good President for five critical years in the history of the College.) Dr Hawkins did not like it. However, it did not make much difference, because he was translated to the post of Registrar to the new General Medical Council, being the first holder, and resigned from the College Registrarship at the next Comitia

(*Annals*, 26, f. 41). He continued as an Elect until the office was abolished in 1860, and he continued to receive the £20 honorarium of the Harveian Librarian until 1872. The appointment of Dr Munk is confirmed by the Cash-Book: in April 1857 the Registrar-Librarian was paid £20.15s.0d: in June he was Registrar £15.15s.0d. with honorarium £5.0s.0d., = £20.15s.0d., and Dr Munk was Harveian Librarian, £5.0s.0d. (f. 737).

It was certainly a revolutionary change: there had been no Harveian Librarian since Richard Tyson in 1750; the Registrar had been explicitly in command, with the Bedell as active Librarian. This revival of a doctor as Harveian Librarian follows so soon after the deliberate change from the old club-library to a practical, modern medical library that there must have been some relationship between the two events: there was, it was simply that to run a medical library properly, a medical man was needed, not the Bedell, as the active Librarian. Munk was 41 at the time, and he held the appointment until his death in 1898. He was the son of an ironmonger at Battle in Sussex, educated at University College and qualified at Leyden in 1837. After demonstrating morbid anatomy at St Thomas's, he held appointments in various dispensaries, the City Road Chest Hospital, the Royal Hospital for Incurables and the Smallpox Hospital, to which he was physician from 1853 to 1893: he was an accepted authority on smallpox, and was called in as a consultant when Prince Arthur, afterwards Duke of Connaught, had the disease in 1867. He had become a Roman Catholic in 1842, and at the time of his appointment as Harveian Librarian was physician to Cardinal Wiseman: the College was more open-minded on the subject than the general British electorate.

There is nothing in the *Annals* to suggest why it was he who was chosen. He had been made a Fellow in 1854, and the *Annals* say nothing more. But the problem is solved by the preface to the first volume of the first edition of the *Roll*, 1861. 'The original MS, in three large volumes, was compiled without any view to publication. It was undertaken with the hope of supplying a want I had myself experienced; and each volume, as it was completed, was presented to the College, and deposited in the Library for the use of Fellows, the first volume, . . . in March 1855; the second . . . in December 1855; and the third in June 1856.' So that his interest in the College, and his desire to serve it, made him an obvious choice. The *Annals* had not reported the receipt of the successive volumes, in spite of their interest and value, although it reported the presentation of a quantity of relatively worthless literature. On 22nd December 1860 'it was resolved on the proposition of the President that the College Roll be printed under the direction of Dr Munk the Harveian Librarian and at the expense of the College' (*Annals*, 27, f. 119); this was done by Messrs Longmans and issued in 1861, one of the better book productions of the era. In June 1861 Dr Hilario Barlow gave notice of motion in Comitia 'that some compensation should be given to Dr Munk for his munificent gift of the manuscript', but this was withdrawn at the next Comitia (*Annals*, 27, f. 190). However, in September the College voted

him 150 guineas 'for his munificent present and the labours he had bestowed on its publication'. There is no entry in the Cash-Book of the College ever having paid Longmans for the printing, but in the 'Receipted Bills' there is an account from J. B. Nichols and Sons for printing — 1000 copies of the *Roll*: £194.7s.6d., and a letter from R. C. Nichols to Dr Munk: 'I beg to enclose with many thanks a receipt for the amount of the cheque from the College of Physicians which you were so good as to bring us a few days ago . . . The amount as enclosed was £194.7s.6d. We can add the difference either to the account for binding or to that for the next volume, as may be thought most convenient'. Munk had given them a cheque for £192.10s.0d., and the receipt for this is on the next page of the 'Receipted Bills', addressed to the College, though there is no record in the Cash-Book that the College ever paid the money. It looks as though Munk gave the College not only the MS and labour, but at least £36 as well.

The first edition of the *Roll* consisted of the first two volumes: I, 1518-1700; and II, 1700-1800. In 1878 a second, revised, edition was published, with the addition of a third volume, 1800-1825. Munk gave his general sources in the preface, and although the book does not include the detailed references one would expect in a modern work, it is remarkably accurate. And remarkably readable: Munk was kindly and reticent about failings, but he had a gently acid wit and a wonderful turn of phrase; anyone in search of entertainment when tired, of distraction in the small hours, or of material for a speech, will find what he wants in almost any opening of the *Roll*. Munk also published an edition of Macmichael's *Gold-headed Cane* in 1884; the lives of two Presidents, John Ayrton Paris in 1857, and Sir Henry Halford in 1895; and a book on *Euthanasia* (in its proper sense), of which matter he was very careful, in 1887.

On 22nd December 1859 it was decided that the Harveian Librarian should be the Secretary of the meetings of the Curators (presumably of the Library), which consisted of the President, two Censors, the Treasurer and the Registrar. This minute constitutes the first of the modern Library Committees, whose first Minute Book starts with a meeting on the 20th April 1860, at which it was decided that the Members' reading-rooms should be closed during meetings of the General Medical Council (which then met at the College); that the dining room should be used as the Members' reading room (the Small Library, next to the Censors' Room, had been used hitherto as such, and it was retained as the Fellows' reading room). Members were to have access only to books in the Catalogue of the Fellows' Reading Room, and it was ruled that Members should write a signed slip for books used. The Committee also gave £100 for the repair of books, a generosity too seldom repeated.

Before the Library Minutes were started, the Library had been given, in 1857, since Munk's appointment, 43 books and the very valuable MS of Heberden's *Commentaries* in Latin, a source still in demand. They were all medical, if education and general science are included as such. In 1858, 55 books were given,

including two non-medical and four on the drainage of London, a matter that was in the public eye (or nose) at the time, and rightly so. The College was well ahead of the Government in appreciating its importance, Mr Gladstone never did. Fifty-three books were given in 1859, all medical, including one more on drains, and three non-medical: the catalogue of the National Gallery (convenient) and two on general history.

Mr Rawes, the Bedell, who had been in charge of the Library, was succeeded by Mr Copney in March 1858, and continued the reporting of the completeness of the Library at each Ordinary Comitia. So Munk started on his long career with practically a new lot of men: Mayo as President, Pitman as Registrar, and Copney as his assistant in the Library. Only Sir John Alderson as Treasurer remained.

On 23rd July 1861 the Library Committee was asked by Dr F. J. Furnivall, the Secretary of the Philological Society, if Dr Woodham Webb might use some of the earliest English works on medicine for the preparation of a new dictionary, which the Society was making, to supplant Dr Johnson's. This involved the College in an historic enterprise. Furnivall worked for many years on the dictionary, on new and scientific principles, but he had too many irons in the fire, and in 1876 the Oxford University Press took it over, made Dr Murray the editor, and the ultimate product was nothing less than the *New English Dictionary*. Furnivall was an interesting man; he was the son of a Bart's doctor, and the father of a well-known Bart's surgeon, Percy Furnivall, who died in 1938. Furnivall's father had been Mary Shelley's doctor. Furnivall was a great oarsman, and as a youth invented and made the first narrow racing-boat with extended out-riggers to give leverage to the oars. He was a great scholar, and used the College MS for his 1868 edition of Chaucer. He wrote a less judicious essay on Shakespeare's metres, which was ridiculed by Swinburne, among others. Furnivall replied with an even less judicious preface, in which he ridiculed Swinburne under the name of 'Pigsbrook'. Swinburne, who was the best vituperator who ever lived, replied with a famous counterblast, calling Furnivall 'Brothelsdyke'. Poor Furnivall, who was at bottom a likeable man, lost all his money in the crash of Gurney's Bank in 1867, and H. H. Gibbs, afterwards Lord Aldenham, the great banker-bibliophile, bought all his possessions at the inevitable sale, and handed them back to Furnivall.

Fifty books were given to the Library in 1860, all medical in the general sense, one of them being Dr H. Freke's *Observations on Darwin's Origin of Species* (*Annals*, 27, f. 89), a very early contribution to the controversy started by that book, which had been published only in 1859. Unfortunately, the College copy has disappeared, though there is one in the British Museum. In 1861 61 books were given, all medical, if one includes Dr Whitecross's *Sketches and Characters*, a primitive book on comparative psychology (*Annals*, 27, f. 207).

The existing catalogue, presumably the 1827 one, was evidently out of date, because in May 1861 Doctors Meryon and Chowne suggested in Comitia that the Library should be asked what assistance should be given to the Harveian Librarian

in making a new one (*Annals*, 27, f. 169). Charles Meryon was that extraordinary doctor who spent the best years of his life as physician to Pitt's eccentric daughter, Lady Hester Stanhope, on Mount Lebanon. He lived to be 96, and was so active in retirement that, at 91, he was the first participant in the West London Hospital's initial effort at postgraduate education in 1872. Dr Dingle Chowne was one of the founders of the Charing Cross Medical School, and the chief unifier of the Westminster Medical Society with the Medical Society of London. The College has good portraits of them both. The Library Committee, when it met in July, after voting £10 to bind the *Annals* in the Registrar's cupboard, asked Messrs Wheatley how much they would charge to make a new catalogue. They replied in October that the Library contained about 12,000 books, or 6,000 titles, and that at £1 per hundred it would cost about £60. Comitia agreed to this at the October meeting (f. 218), and in 1862 Mr B. R. Wheatley started the work. He was a bibliographer distinguished enough to appear in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He was born in 1819, and started by cataloguing part of the Heber Library for his father, a Piccadilly auctioneer, at the age of 17. He catalogued a great many libraries, including those of the Athenaeum and most of the other London Clubs, and of the Geological Society and the Privy Council, the Lansdown, Hafod, Lilford and Vernon Libraries, and the Library of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, of which he became Librarian; it became the Royal Society of Medicine. He also wrote books on libraries and cataloguing. He finished the College catalogue in 1863, and a tripod stand was ordered for its three volumes by the Committee in December 1862. The 'oak stand or lectern' which they apparently ordered in that September must have been a preliminary to the definite decision. This 1863 catalogue no longer exists: it probably fell to pieces and was thrown away when the College moved to Regent's Park.

To go back to 1861, the same May Comitia also produced a report on the salaries of the College Officers, in which was the recommendation that (f. 176) the Harveian Librarian should be given £50 p.a. instead of Harvey's £20, and that in consideration of this payment he should undertake the duties of Librarian to the College. This was agreed on 25th June (f. 187), subject to the recommendation of Dr Hawkins that the words 'in lieu of his former Honorarium of £20' were added. Why this amendment was made is obscure: it did not affect the continued payment of £20 p.a. to Dr Hawkins as ex-Librarian. Moreover, the 'duties of the Librarian' are equally obscure, unless it meant that the Harveian Librarian was to perform the duties previously left to the Bedell. He did not. Mr Copney continued to report at each Comitia on the state of the Library, and to attend to issue books in the reading room. But it certainly sounds like a harbinger of things to come: in 1867 great changes were made in the Bedell's duties, and Mr Copney was the last Bedell who reported that all the books were present in the Library. He was certainly helping in the Reading Room in 1866, because he was rebuked for not cancelling names on the list when books were returned (*Annals*, 29, ff. 44, 45).