Early plant hunting in Britain. The first organized botanical excursions in Britain were almost certainly those of the Society of Apothecaries and the earliest printed accounts of these were by Thomas Johnson. He published two small volumes, each dealing with the botany of Kent and of Hampstead Heath: the *Iter* in 1629 and the *Descriptio* in 1632. These little books are exceedingly rare; only 2 copies of the *Iter* and 5 of the *Descriptio* are known. They were included in a volume of reprinted botanical works published by T. Ralph in 1847, and reissued separately in 1849; both are hard to find, and, like the originals, are in latin. A facsimile edition* with translations and commentaries is thus a valuable addition to the history of British botany.

The first published records of British Plants are to be found in William Turner's *Libellus de re herbaria* (1538), which may be consulted in the Ray Society reprint (1965). It is astonishing to realize that Johnson's accounts of the plants found on his visits to Kent and to Hampstead Heath come nearly a hundred years later—and that between times there had been little save the records included by Gerard in his herbal (1597). British botany made a slow start.

On July 13 1629, "mindful of the date", Johnson and his associates assembled in St Paul's Cathedral, and then hurried to the river, where they hired two boats to take them to Gravesend. Their start was appropriately inauspicious, as a sudden storm separated the two boats and one was forced into Greenwich: however this seemed to cause little worry and those who reached Gravesend carried on and were re-joined by their companions before nightfall. It is good to have Johnson's vivid account of the journeys. When they arrived at the Isle of Sheppey Johnson and his companions were questioned by the local mayor, who was suspicious of the motives of so many strangers arriving together. Some more recent botanical travellers will smile wistfully of reading (p. 57) how easily the mayor was persuaded of the harmlessness of their activities.

The second journey (1632) had a splendid start, by sailing barge from London to Margate. Thence they crossed Thanet southwards to Sandwich and Sandowne Castle before turning west and making the journey back to London via Canterbury. The journeys are thoughtfully mapped for us in this edition on Philip Symonson's map of N Kent of 1596, with an up to date map of the same area printed in parallel.

Apart from the narrative, there are not only the lists of the wild flora (including some seaweeds, mosses and lichens) found at each spot; there are occasionally lists of cultivated plants. It is interesting, for instance, to find *Helianthus annuus* (introd. 1596) and *Hemerocallis fulva* (introd. 1576) already in cultivation at Nash Court (pp 109-110).

For the editor, John Gilmour, publication of this volume is the culmination of a long labour of love. It was he who persuaded the late Canon Raven to make the translations, and Dr Rose to check and revise the modern botanical names. Both of them performed their tasks admirably, as did the other contributors to the introduction and appendices. The account of the botany of Hampstead Heath by P. W. Richards is particularly good as he draws on his own memories of the area in 1927 to link the conditions of Johnson's time to those that obtain to-day.

All in all this is a splendid production for which Mr. Gilmour and his collaborators, the Cambridge University Printing House, and the Hunt Botanical Library, who publish this as No 3 of a Facsimile series, deserve our warmest thanks.

B. L. BURTT

* Thomas Johnson. Botanical Journeys in Kent and Hampstead. A facsimile reprint with Introduction and Translation of his Iter plantarum 1629, Descriptio itineris plantarum 1632. Edited by J. S. L. Gilmour. The Hunt Botanical Library, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1972. 27 cms. Pp ix + 167: 2 fold-out maps.