

Book Reviews

disease. One first-class original contribution, by John Brooke, compares the images of Whewell and Priestley as nineteenth-century caricatures embellished by twentieth-century sociologists. McEvoy summarizes his well-documented analysis of Priestley. Many of the other papers, based on exegesis of particular sides of Priestley's complex thoughts, connect perhaps too little with the original significance of the man: his chemical experiments and indeed with the catalogue at the back of the book. However the volume does provide an impression of the intellectual anatomy of this eccentric and elusive figure. One does begin to look at the well-reproduced pictures of his apparatus with a better sense of his Faustian world. Historians looking for a fascinating project should read the book and dream.

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F. J. J. VAN ASSEN and others (editors), *Een eeuw vrouwenarts*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1987, 8vo, pp. 313, illus., Dfl. 39.00.

As part of its centenary celebrations, the Dutch Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (NVOG) produced a memorial book with the title *One hundred years of women's doctors* (the German "Frauenarzt"). It contains a history of the Society, based on the minutes of its meetings, as well as articles dealing with the development of the speciality in The Netherlands and its former colonies, Indonesia, Surinam, and the Dutch West Indies.

Although the book's editors include some historians of medicine, almost all the contributions were written by members of the Society, themselves doctors, which makes for a sympathetic but generally "whiggish" approach towards the past. The book was obviously written, in the first place, for Dutch obstetricians and gynaecologists. Its significance for the historian of medicine is principally as a source of anecdotes and personal reminiscences, but it is an interesting historical document in itself. Striking, for example, is the attitude to midwives to which the articles attest. Unlike most of their colleagues abroad, Dutch obstetricians have retained a positive attitude and have consistently argued that midwives' education be maintained at a high level. It is apparent that they have done so throughout the history of the NVOG. Female obstetricians and gynaecologists who have figured in the Society's past have not been forgotten and a special chapter is devoted to them. Wherever patients are mentioned, the tone is considered and respectful. This book then seems to me to be a true witness to the unique, woman-friendly character of Dutch obstetrics that persists despite growing demands for a more technical approach.

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JANE TURNER CENSER (editor), *The papers of Frederick Law Olmstead*, vol. IV, *Defending the Union: the Civil War and the U.S. Sanitary Commission 1861-1863*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. xxv, 757, illus. £26.50.

Frederick Law Olmstead was one of the many gifted nineteenth-century amateurs who spread their talents over several areas. Best known for his description of the *ante bellum* South and for the creation of Central Park in New York City, he also planned parks and estates for Louisville and other American cities. Olmstead was drawn to the United States Sanitary Commission by his abolitionist zeal and his association with Henry W. Bellows, a Unitarian minister largely responsible for the organization of the Commission. The Sanitary Commission grew out of the desire by voluntary women's associations to aid the war effort in the North. Its original purpose was to serve as a central agency to gather and distribute food, clothing, and medical supplies to the Union soldiers, but the physicians who dominated the executive board also envisioned it as an agency to gather statistical and medical information on the troops. Olmstead, the first secretary of the newly-founded Commission, saw it as a means for teaching self-discipline,