

## Book Reviews

For all the obvious hazards and problems of using such a compilation, it is an extraordinary resource. It should surely provide the basis for a much-needed prosopography of the medical trade in the pre-reform era. The sheer proliferation of numbers (there are clearly well over 35,000 medical practitioners, in the narrow sense, listed here) provides ample confirmation of the arguments, recently adduced by Joan Lane, Irvine Loudon, Geoffrey Holmes, and others, that the practice of medicine was burgeoning in Georgian England—the trade was perhaps even becoming overstocked. Moreover, the Wallises' data demonstrate the extraordinary richness and variety of medical practice: army and navy surgeons abound, as do chemists and druggists, horse-doctors, tradesmen who double as booksellers and apothecaries, and, not least, women practitioners (far from all of whom are midwives). It is no surprise that some operators principally identified themselves as “inoculators”; it is intriguing to find other practitioners listed as “phlebotomists”. In the early years of the “consumer economy”, medicine, far from languishing, or being constrained by the traditional hierarchical pyramid of apothecary, surgeon, and physician, evidently flourished in tropical abundance, before the pruning action performed by Victorian professional reform.

This index is a magnificent research tool which should help sustain the recent revival of interest in eighteenth-century medical history. Its authors deserve our grateful thanks.

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M. J. van LIEBURG and H. A. M. SNELDERS, *'De bevordering en volmaking der proefondervindelijke wijsbegeerte': de rol van het Bataafsche Genootschap te Rotterdam in de geschiedenis van de natuurwetenschappen, geneeskunde en techniek (1769–1988)* [‘The advancement and perfection of experimental philosophy’: the role of the Batavian Society of Rotterdam in the history of the natural sciences, medicine and technology], Amsterdam and Atlanta, Rodopi, 1989, 4to, pp. 270, illus., Dfl. 60.00.

The Batavian Society was set up in Rotterdam in 1769, and was very much a part of the urban, male, upper-class dilettante fashion of the European Enlightenment. The word “Batavian” in its title is significant: it refers to the largely mythical Germanic tribe which revolted against the Roman occupation of the Low Countries, and from which the Dutch used to like to think they were descended. The Batavian Society, then, was a national Dutch scientific society, with more than local pretensions. For the last 220 years the Society has held essay competitions, published its proceedings, arranged courses for the public, awarded prizes, subsidized research and corresponded with individuals and institutions at home and abroad. Louis Pasteur himself was a member. This handsome book traces the development of the Society, first in a general historical-descriptive chapter (by both authors), and then by a series of chapters covering either the natural sciences and technology (Snelders) or the medical activities of the Society (Van Lieburg) in various periods. The two authors join up again for a final chapter on the Society since 1945. For those who do not read Dutch, there is little help: no list of contents or summary in a more universal language. The authors claim in their preface to be writing the Society's history both in terms of the history of science, and of the history of societies and associations, which is undergoing a golden age at present, especially in the Netherlands. Societies like the *Bataafsche Genootschap* often have meticulously preserved archives, and are excellent hunting grounds for the fashionable *histoire des mentalités*. The authors of this book take up some of these opportunities in their study, while readily admitting that there is still a great deal of work yet to be done. They delve into such things as the introduction of steam power to the Netherlands, the outbursts of contagious diseases which plagued the later part of the eighteenth century, the Society's links with the “Patriot” revolutionary politics of the 1780s, and the Masonic connection. This is a well researched book in celebration of the long life of the Society which commissioned the work; on occasion it goes beyond that and offers a highly readable contribution to the history of science, medicine, and technology.

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