

Book Reviews

Th. H. LUNSINGH SCHEURLEER and G. H. M. POSTHUMUS MEYJES (editors), *Leiden University in the seventeenth century. An exchange of learning*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1975, fo, pp. viii, 496, illus., Dfl. 175.

In the history of medicine we judge the University of Leiden to be the most outstanding centre for medical education during the early decades of the eighteenth century. It is usually forgotten, however, that it had also won fame in the previous century in science, including the medical sciences, and in the teaching of other areas of knowledge. This lavishly produced book presents us with a more balanced view of the university's overall achievement. Thus there are chapters on Bible studies, classical philology, Arabic scholarship, etc., written in English, French and German, and one in Dutch.

Five essays deal with the history of the sciences: anatomy, physiology, the mechanical school, experimental physics, and chemistry. That on anatomy, by the senior editor, entitled 'Un amphithéâtre d'anatomie moralisée', traces the Leiden anatomical theatre from its inception by Pieter Pauw (1564–1617) in 1593 through the seventeenth century. The author is especially concerned with the amphitheatre's artistic and literary associations and with illustrations in it, many of which are reproduced here, but there is little about the history of anatomy *per se*. This, however, is a unique approach to the history of anatomical theatres, and of great interest.

Physiology is represented by 'Dog and frog. Physiological experiments at Leyden during the seventeenth century', the author of which is the well-known Boerhaave scholar, Professor Gerrit A. Lindeboom. Throughout the century experiments on the main functions of the animal body were carried out, and the basis for the understanding of fundamental physiological processes was established. The Dutch contribution to this subject was, therefore, considerable, and due to such investigators as Walaeus, De Graaf, Pauw, Schuyl, Swammerdam, Drélincourt and Nuck.

Theodoor Craanen (1621–1690) established a mechanical-philosophical school in Leiden, based on Cartesian precepts, which he applied to health and disease. Antonie M. Luyendijk-Elshout discusses it here. The Scotsman, Archibald Pitcairne (1652–1713), who was professor in the University of Leyden for one year only (1692–1693), instigated the attack on this highly speculative system, and by the end of the century it was dead.

In the case of chemistry ('The beginning of chemistry' by J. W. van Spronsen) the chair was established so that this subject could be applied to medicine, probably due to the influence of the great iatro-chemist, Franciscus de le Boë (Sylvius). In practice it was the preparation of medicines, and advances were few before Boerhaave separated the two subjects in the next century. The discussion of 'Experimental physics' by C. de Pater supplements the book, E. G. Ruestow, *Physics at seventeenth and eighteenth century Leiden; philosophy and the new science in the university*, (The Hague, 1973).

Each article in this excellent book is a detailed scholarly exercise, with full documentation and illustration. There can be few criticisms and students and workers in the history of medicine must read the relevant chapters. In addition they should also study the other sections so that they can obtain a much more balanced appreciation of Leiden University in the century before its medical heyday.