

### Book Reviews

medical historian. For others it is too limited in content and time-span, too textually superficial, and clearly the product of a non-medical individual. The topic is so large that collaboration would have been the only way to have made this attractive picture-book a professional treatise.

MAURICE CROSLAND, *Gay-Lussac. Scientist and bourgeois*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, 8vo, pp. xvi, 333, front., £15.00.

The name Gay-Lussac is widely known, due mainly to its use for degrees of strength of alcoholic liquors. A critical examination of the man (1778-1850) and his work, however, has had to await this excellent book by Professor Crosland, the renowned British historian of chemistry. Gay-Lussac is especially famous for his discovery of the law of combination of gases, one of the basic concepts of chemistry today. He also achieved several important advances in electro-chemistry, and he was one of the nineteenth-century giants who helped to make science a profession.

Crosland's book is a scholarly work dealing not only with its central character, but also with the social, economic, industrial, and political aspects of French society in the first half of the nineteenth century. It will remain for some years the definitive biography of a man who has so far been given inadequate attention. It will deservedly find a wide audience.

DOROTHY KOENIGSBERGER, *Renaissance man and creative thinking. A history of concepts of harmony 1400-1700*, Hassocks, Sussex, Harvester Press, 1979, 8vo, pp. xiii, 282, £13.50.

To encompass the breadth of learning adequately to understand the progression of the Renaissance thought is no easy task. The author believes that the doctrine of universal harmony was an essential component of the period. This harmony was to be found in music and natural philosophy, as well as between man and god, mind and nature. To attest this she calls on Renaissance individuals such as Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci, and Nicholas of Cusa to illustrate her thesis, and uses magic, music, and universality to do likewise. The harmony is to be appreciated intuitively, and to understand it an analysis of the concepts of the chief Renaissance figures is therefore supplied. Thus architecture, mathematics, physiology of the circulation, the origins of Newtonian philosophy, and anatomy, in addition to those already mentioned, are considered. Dr. Koenigsberger's book is not easy to read, but it is fully documented and it provides an excellent survey of a most exciting yet most complex era. Those concerned with medicine and science of the Renaissance and beyond will find it of great value. Unfortunately the index is grossly inadequate.

G. A. LINDEBOOM, *Descartes and medicine*, Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi, 1978, 8vo, pp. 134, illus., Dfl. 30.00 (paperback).

Despite the fact that Descartes (1596-1650) was not a physician he had a deep and lasting effect on the development of medicine. Professor Lindeboom, the distinguished Dutch physician and historian of medicine, aims in this book to describe this impact in the centuries after his death. It is an introduction to the study of Descartes' attitude to medicine and his contacts and relations with physicians in Holland, where he lived for