the editors' desire to establish her 'historical importance', or the blurb's claim that she 'deserves to stand beside Florence Nightingale'. Even Mrs Seacole herself, never slow to blow her own trumpet, does not make such a claim. There is nothing to suggest that she had any influence on the organisation or methods of health care delivery, or that she wanted to.

This is not to deny that she was an unusual and interesting character. On her arrival in England she was greeted as a minor celebrity, her exploits having been reported in the newspapers, and a Grand Military Festival was held for her benefit in the Royal Surrey Gardens in 1857; Punch published a poem in tribute, and a subscription fund was later launched to rescue her finances; she also received medals, though their identity remains a mystery.

The book is enjoyable and often fascinating, and sheds light on all sorts of topics ranging from colonialism in Latin America to the activities behind the lines in the Crimean War. But the editors' apparent urge to rehabilitate her as a black heroine does not quite tally with a careful reading of Mrs Seacole's own account of herself.

Jane Salvage
London

BOOKS RECEIVED

(Listing of a book received here does not preclude a review at a later date)

Allsop, Judy Health Policy & The National Health Service. Longman, 1984

Calder, Angus & Sheridan, Dorothy Speak for Yourself: A Mass Observation Anthology 1937-49. Cape, 1984

Finch, Janet & Groves, Dulcie (eds.) A Labour of Love: Women, Work and Caring. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983

Iliffe, Steve The NHS: A Picture of Health? Lawrence & Wishart, 1983

Koppelman, Susan (comp.) Old Maids: Short Stories by Nineteenth Century U.S. Women Writers. Pandora, 1984

Vansittart, Peter Voices 1870-1914. Cape, 1984