

Comment

Early Obstetric Atlas

The 'Obstetric Tables' by George Spratt was published in many editions, in both Great Britain and the USA.¹

This fascinating early obstetric atlas is remarkable in that some of the illustrations incorporate lift up sections or 'flaps',



Figure 1 The 'flaps' unopened.



Figure 2 Depiction of the 'flap' technique used by Spratt to represent the stages of gestation.



Figure 3 Detail of the 'flap' technique.

or what we now know as 'pop-up books' (Figs 1–3). Many of the illustrations in Spratt's volumes have been found in earlier obstetric texts.² George Spratt used these illustrations with the enhancement of the addition, or super-imposition, of layers of paper.

The first medical text to use these movable pieces of paper was 'Tabulae sex' by anatomist Vesalius in 1538. The technique has since been used by many other disciplines.³

Little is known of the author George Spratt, although he is listed on the title page of the book as being a Surgeon-Accoucheur. The books are dedicated to Sir Charles Mansfield Clarke Bart, Physician to the Queen. An extensive list of subscribers to the volumes is also included.

The Rare Book Collection of the Frank Forster Library is fortunate to have in its collection, both this 2nd edition, 1837, and the 3rd edition, 1841, of Spratt's *Obstetric Tables*.

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References

- 1 Spratt G. *Obstetric Tables: Comprising Graphic Illustrations, with Descriptions and Practical Remarks, Exhibiting on Dissected Plates Many Important Subjects in Midwifery*, Vols 1 & 2, 2nd edn. London: John Churchill, 1837.
- 2 Maygrier JP. *Nouvelles demonstrations d'accouchemens, avec des planches en taille-douce, accompagnées d'un texte raisonne, propre a en faciliter l'explication*, format in – folio. Paris: Bechet, 1822.
- 3 Pena AC. Those marvelous movable books. www.inq7.net/lif/2001/apr/30/lif_6-1.htm (accessed 29/11/2002).