

## Book Reviews

Schofield argues, were probably linked to England's early development of an individuated and mobile society with a minimal dependence on kinship obligations.

However, in spite of these social mechanisms, some high-price years can be linked to local or regional surges in mortality. Particularly in the seventeenth century, this pattern is most common in areas where economic and social welfare development was retarded (as in much of the north of England and most of continental Europe), though, as both David Weir and Jacques Dupâquier show, even in most of France by the eighteenth century, most of any impact of high-price years on mortality was offset by lower deaths in successive years. Moreover, at a detailed local level, certainly by this period, large numbers of people very seldom died of hunger or of "hunger-related" disease. Indeed, this book frequently reminds us that the relationship between poor nutritional status and susceptibility to disease is complex, often minimal, and at times even negative; where mortality crises are associated with poor harvest years, a series of social processes must therefore intervene. One fascinating set of clues emerge from an observation of Weir's. In the eighteenth century, high prices in central France were followed in later years by surges of mortality in Paris and the North, clearly suggesting a gradual spread of infection encouraged by poor diet and dispersed by hunger-induced migration spreading infectious disease. Moreover, some of the social mechanisms designed to reduce hunger among urban populations (for example by price controls and distribution of grain to the poor) could also induce mortality surges if starving people flooded in from the countryside bearing disease with them (a factor which would readily explain the finding that all classes in some French cities suffered in food shortage years).

Andrew Appleby would have been fascinated and provoked by this book; it is a fitting memorial.

Michael Anderson, University of Edinburgh

FRANÇOIS DU PORT, *The decade of medicine or The physician of the rich and the poor in which all the signs, causes and remedies of disease are clearly expounded*, ed. H. Diehl and Georg Hartmann, Heidelberg, Springer, 1988, 12mo, pp. v, 216, DM 64.00.

This is a beautiful little book that gives the impression of reading in modern English the seventeenth-century *La decade de médecine ou Le médecin des riches et des pauvres*. Composed in Latin verse early in the century by François Du Port, the book was published in French and Latin verse in 1694 by one of Louis XIV's physicians, Du Four. H. Diehl translated it into modern German, and David Le Vay made the translation into English prose (one presumes working with the original rather than the German, but that is not made clear).

The one-page preface (the only introductory material there is) simply announces that because Du Port was a "country doctor" who practised for 30 years, he was able to "report the symptoms and causes of different diseases", recording his "experiences" in Latin verse. In fact, as one would expect, the book contains no first-hand comments, whatever Du Port's experience. Instead, it follows the usual organization of such books: a short introductory section on health, the humours, and the general causes of disease; a longer section on the diagnosis, prognosis, and causes of local diseases, beginning with those of the head and ending with those of the belly and generative organs; and ending with a slightly longer section still on the treatment for these diseases. This is all done in a manner that would have been familiar to the scholastics, although it contains no references to previous authors while being sprinkled with the kind of classical allusions favoured by the humanists. It does contain some material on a new venereal disease, syphilis, but again there is nothing out of the ordinary about Du Port's description of the disease nor about its treatment.

If this book is not exactly a report of the experiences of a practising physician, then what is it? One is tempted to say that it belongs to the genre of self-help books and "treasuries for the poor" that had a medieval origin and proliferated in the early modern period, except that it was originally written in Latin rather than the vernacular. What probably made it worth publishing

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was not Du Port's learning but Du Four's French versifying. Many Latin poets were being translated into the vernacular at Louis' court, or being used as the basis for new compositions in the grand style. Du Four's little book, then, like the Salernitan Regimen, tried to present what "everyone" knew in beautiful language. Like many others of his day, he would not have hesitated to use someone else's Latin verse as the foundation for his French, while giving him the credit on the title page. This helps explain the old-fashioned nature of the contents: the attempt to speak to eternal verities means that no bits of potentially incorrect modern theories (like the circulation of the blood) intrude when Du Four writes of health being a perfect balance of the humours in the blood, which is formed in the liver. And Du Four's concern with metre helps to explain both the compactness of prose and the frequent flights of fancy that mark this English version: for example, in the description of diabetes, we find that "the bite of the serpent Dipsas that furrows the Lybian sand produces this great thirst and frequent drinking" (p. 57), and in the signs and causes of uterine passion we discover that the woman suffering from this complaint is not "satisfied by Apollo's grove or by Lucina, winged child of Paphos" (p. 68).

In short, what this edition gives us is a lovely example (although in prose) of the exalted medicine of the French court of the later seventeenth century. The care of the editor, translator, and publisher have reproduced some of that elegance in a fine little book that will add lustre to anyone's shelf.

Harold J. Cook, University of Wisconsin-Madison

VALERIE FILDES (ed.), *Women as mothers in pre-industrial England*, Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine, London and New York, Routledge, 1990, 8vo, pp. xvii, 225, £35.00.

KATHERINE ARNUP, ANDRÉE LÉVESQUE, and RUTH ROACH PIERSON (eds.), *Delivering motherhood: maternal ideologies and practices in the 19th and 20th centuries*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990, 8vo, pp. xxv, 322, illus., £30.00.

As the 21 essays in these two volumes cannot be thoroughly assessed in a brief review, I will try to provide enough of a sense of the contents so that readers can decide whether they want to acquire them or not. Many of the 14 essays in the collection edited by Katherine Arnup et al., have previously appeared in print; its title does not make it clear that, with two exceptions (an article on the American "La Leche League", founded in 1956, and a summary of the writings of Swedish feminist Ellen Key), the contents are entirely about Canada. There is of course nothing wrong with writing about Canadian women's history from a feminist perspective. Indeed, this collection conveys how lively and wide-ranging current research on this subject is in English Canada and Quebec. But the contents are quite uneven. Their greatest defect is that so few are based upon archival sources, a shortcoming not easily excusable in dealing with just a few decades of the history of a small country. Yet those which do draw upon archival material are excellent: Angus McLaren's and Arlene Tigar McLaren's article on abortion deaths in British Columbia between the wars, which establishes the role of abortion in keeping the death rate from "maternal mortality" high throughout the period; Hélène Laforce's contribution on the elimination of midwives from practice in Quebec, a result of the overcrowded medical profession's efforts to reduce competition; and Andrée Lévesque's article on single mothers at the Hôpital de la Miséricorde in Montreal between 1929 and 1939, which highlights the social pressures on those mothers who did not subsequently marry, to abandon their children.

From English Canada come several less thoroughly-grounded contributions, mainly about midwives and the growing hospitalization of deliveries. These are uniformly condemnatory of the doctors and of hospital birth. Jo Oppenheimer's essay on Ontario, based uncritically on official statistics on maternal mortality, even closes with a plea for home delivery. The volume contains, finally, several interesting articles generally related to the lives of women: Diane Dodd writes about a birth-control clinic in the 1930s in Hamilton, Ontario, and Cecilia Benoit interviews various women in a community in Newfoundland about what life was once like for mothers. She reaches no particular conclusions, aside from pointing out there were good sides and bad. Of the