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present and traces, somewhat tediously at times, the struggle of the medical profession in Victoria to control the supply of doctors, divisions within its ranks and competition from without – the alternative practitioner (chemists, homoeopaths and opticians), Friendly Societies, and various attempts by the government to establish a national health scheme. Instrumental in the favourable outcome of this struggle was the rise of a strong medical trade union and the effective application – and control – of developments in medical science and technology. The resultant solidarity and authority of the profession is not only reflected in its enhanced socio-legal status and consequent economic and political power, but has so increased the distance between the practitioner and the public, and the doctors' control of the medical market, that today "what is in the best interests of the consumer is frequently determined by a profession which sees the public's welfare as synonymous with its own." (p. 179). Current reaction to this situation both within the profession (the Doctors' Reform Society) and without (recent legislation favouring chiropractors) suggests that the medical practitioner will need to continue the struggle to maintain his present position.

Although these processes are common to the professionalization of European, free-enterprise medicine, there are certain Australian features which, while hinted at, bear further examination. One is the gradual dominance of the native-born and -trained doctor, aggressive in his growing independence of British, colonial medicine and in the adaptation of medical science to Australian conditions. Mr. Pensabene could have demonstrated more effectively that the present status of the medical practitioner has been achieved largely by capitalizing on a traditionally conservative profession functioning in a relatively isolated, materially prosperous but politically immature environment. Nevertheless, this timely monograph provides the data and arguments for some fruitful developments in both Australian and comparative medical history.

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WILLIAM A. DANDO, *The geography of famine*, London, Edward Arnold, 1980 8vo, pp. xii, 209, illus., £12.50.

This comprehensive and interesting book is one in the Scripta Series in Geography and as such concentrates on different aspects of famine from those specifically related to medicine or sociology. Despite advances in agriculture and food technology, controversy remains over the possibility of a world famine on such a scale that predictions suggest that more people will die in the twentieth century from famine than in any previous century.

Professor Dando's thesis throughout is that though natural factors cause crop failures it is man who causes famines. He supports this view by an analysis, on an international basis, of the historical and spatial dynamics of famine. His book is divided into four main sections. Part I, man's bond with the earth, deals with the parameters of food production, the evolution of food sources and preferences, and provides a concise summary of man's nutritional needs and staple foods. Parts II and III consider famines of the past and use three in-depth case studies of famines in England and the UK, India, and Russia as a key to the future. These have been chosen as being representative, respectively, of: western culture and capitalism, eastern

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culture, colonialism and a hybrid political system, and lastly Marxism with a mixed culture and racial base. The author has drawn on a computer bank of references covering some eight thousand observations on famines over the past six thousand years.

The extreme difficulties inherent in recording and analysing famines are recognized. Ten pages of various definitions of famine are given, a good working precept being "a protracted total shortage of food in a restricted geographical area causing widespread disease and death from starvation". The lack of detailed research on famines is not really surprising. In the acute situation no researcher can coolly investigate the conditions and attitudes of those starving when the predominant action must be the alleviation of hunger and prevention of death.

Part IV considers food, population, policies and strategies in relation to the prevention of a world famine. Using clear diagrams, lists, and graphs predominantly derived from United Nations sources the author discusses food availability and distribution, world food/population balance, and the world's carrying capacity (i.e. the ability of a place's resources to support a given way of life). He concludes that until humans recognize the importance of the well-being of all humans, and the environment is regarded as a responsibility rather than an economic opportunity, famines will signify that the carrying capacity of an environment has been exceeded.

In the last chapter 'Policies and strategies' and the Epilogue, Professor Dando considers the Malthusian population theory and social policies, the "lifeboat" ethic, the triage ethic, and the Golden Rule (do as you would be done by) as possible policies that may be used by those in power. He is particularly concerned about current United States food policy which must have a powerful influence on the world situation. There are too many unknowns for the carrying capacity of the world to be quantified. However, Professor Dando has shown the role that humans play in moulding their physical and social environment, and places famines within their proper perspective of cultural decision-making. This book is a valuable contribution to the literature on food problems and famine and of interest to all those who are concerned about hunger in the world.

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MICHAEL HOWELL and PETER FORD, *The true history of the elephant man*, London, Penguin Books, 1980, 8vo, pp. 223, illus., £1.25 (paperback).

The basic outlines of the life of Joseph Merrick, the elephant man, have long been known, above all from the short memoir published by Sir Frederick Treves in 1923. In 1884 as a young surgeon at the London Hospital Treves found Merrick being exhibited at 2d. a time as a freak in a vacant shop in Whitechapel. A man in his early twenties, Merrick was suffering from acute neurofibromatosis. The bone structures of his right arm and both legs were misshapen and extended, he had great bosses of bone growing out of his skull, and over much of his body his skin was pendulous, hanging in great folds.