

Book Reviews

from short conference papers, should be seen as a preliminary presentation of results. Two clear conclusions emerge: the complexities of the ancient trade in staple foodstuffs, particularly grain, and the success achieved by the classical conquest cities, Athens and Rome, and to some extent Carthage and Alexandria, in securing a generally adequate food supply for the citizen inhabitants of the capital city. Such subsistence crises as there were were few and short term. Their armies too seem to have been well fed, with arrangements for their provisioning. But on the smaller towns, on the fate of the provincials, this collection of essays is largely silent. The evidence of the local chronicle of Edessa (S. Turkey) for the fourth and fifth centuries, or the story of a famine at Myra in Lycia in the sixth, suggests that the generally optimistic tone of writers at the centre may have to be considerably modified for the Roman empire as a whole, and Galen's famous description of peasants having to resort to eating roots may not have been wide of the mark. On the relationship between malnutrition, famine, and disease, little is said, and that contradictory (pp. 16, 64). This useful volume signposts a way ahead, but much travelling is still needed before a satisfactory destination is reached.

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JOHN A. PITHIS, *Die Schriften ΠΕΡΙ ΣΦΥΓΜΩΝ des Philaretos*, Husum, Matthiesen Verlag, 1983, 8vo, pp. 263. [no price stated] (paperback).

The physicians of the Western Middle Ages and of the renaissance derived their theory of the pulse from an obscure Greek called Philaretos, whose little book was, from the eleventh century on, included in the Latin compendium called the *Articella*. Dr Pithis now publishes for the first time the original Greek text, as well as a version of the Latin translation based on Auxerre 240, a German translation, and a full and detailed commentary. Thanks to Dr Pithis, the proper study of this important text can now be said to have begun at last. One can now see how this Byzantine author, who worked between the early ninth and the late eleventh century, adapted a basis of Galenic ideas, largely mediated through the pseudo-Galenic tract "On pulses, for Antonius", and produced an excellent elementary guide to the pulse. The Latin translator omitted the brief preface, with even a joke(?), l. 25f., and from l. 242 on, has a different ending. The interpretation of Galenic medicine was thus no static repetition, even in the Middle Ages, and was capable of adaptation to the needs of teaching and practice. Even in Latin, the very early Salernitan MS., Wellcome 801A, shows some differences from the Auxerre MS. used as the illustration of the Latin tradition. Dr Pithis' valuable study throws a great deal of much-needed light into an important corner of Galenism.

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K. THEODORE HOPPEN (compiler), *The papers of the Dublin Philosophical Society 1683-1708* (text on microfiche, introduction and index in printed booklet), Dublin, Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1983, £14.00. (Obtainable from Trade and Postal Sales, Stationery Office, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4.)

This product of seventeen years' work will throw much light on social and intellectual development in Ireland in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The compiler has presented in coherent form the complete surviving papers of the Dublin Philosophical Society. The introduction with an index was printed in *Analecta Hibernica*, while the text and illustrations, with necessary annotations, have been produced as twenty microfiches.

The Dublin Philosophical Society provided a forum for discussion to many Irish medical men prior to the foundation of professional societies, but their contributions often dealt with other disciplines while lay members commented on medical matters.

The compiler is to be congratulated on this important work and given sympathy for the long delay between completion and publication.

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