

### Book Reviews

improved: expectation of life at twenty rose, age at marriage for women fell, more land was available. But plague had left a middle-aged and elderly population, and by 1400 Halesowen was doomed to demographic stagnation for a generation or more. This general picture had been suggested by much previous work on medieval agrarian society, but it had not been established in such overwhelming and convincing detail. Thanks to Dr. Razi, historians of the Black Death and its effects now have some firm statistical ground to stand upon. It is safe to predict that Halesowen will become as famous in historical demography as Dr. E. A. Wrigley's Colyton, and there could be no higher praise than that.

Paul Slack  
Exeter College, Oxford

V. E. LLOYD HART, *John Wilkes and the Foundling Hospital at Aylesbury*, Aylesbury, Bucks., HM + M Publishers, 1979, 8vo, pp. 79, illus., £5.00.

There is a wealth of manuscript information pertaining to the Foundling Hospital and its country branches, yet published work on this important eighteenth-century social institution is minimal; but it is not for this reason alone that Dr. Lloyd Hart's small book is a welcome addition to the literature. He gives, in a lucid, readable style, a lively account of the foundation of the small branch hospital at Aylesbury, its intimate involvement with the local Member of Parliament, John Wilkes, and the events leading to its closure in 1768. The first quarter of the book gives much original background information about the London Foundling Hospital and a further chapter provides brief details about the large Yorkshire branch at Ackworth. The personalities involved are clearly etched and, through their letters, the author demonstrates the compassion for and the care taken to ensure the well-being of these unwanted infants.

If there is a criticism of this book, it is one of brevity. It merely whets the appetite and leaves the reader wanting to know more; both about the foundlings and the running of the institution. For this reason it is to be hoped that this small local study is only the precursor of larger and more informative volumes about the Foundling Hospital.

Valerie Fildes  
Wellcome Institute

T. S. PENSABENE, *The rise of the medical practitioner in Victoria*, Canberra, Australian National University, 1980, 8vo, pp. xiii, 219, illus., [no price stated], (paperback).

The social implications of developments in Australian medicine have received scant attention from historians. This scrupulously researched case-study is therefore welcomed as a fundamental contribution to Australian medical history and to an understanding of the importance and influence of doctors in Australian society today.

As an economic historian, Mr. Pensabene is concerned with two questions: "How did the medical practitioner improve his professional status? How was this increased status directed?" (p. 5). To answer these questions he takes the period 1870 to the

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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.

Helen Woolcock  
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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