

Book Reviews

E. A. E. REYMOND (editor), *From the contents of the libraries of the Suchos Temples in the Fayyum. Part 1. A medical book from Crocodilopolis. P. Vindob. D. 6257*, Vienna, Brüder Hollinek, 1976, 4to, pp. 304, illus., [no price stated].

The addition of a new Ancient Egyptian medical papyrus to the small number in existence is an important event. Dr. Reymond, of Oxford, therefore deserves our gratitude for providing the first edition and complete analysis of a Demotic papyrus, the Fayyum medical book, from the Austrian National Library.

Her introduction deals first with the collection of Demotic documents in Vienna to which this one belongs, and then he discusses it in detail. The papyrus is made up of twenty fragments, which are part of a large document dating from the second century A.D. and probably composed at Memphis. Part III is an analysis of the medical book, 'Medical traditions, experience and practice . . .'. There is also a transliteration of the Demotic text into Roman characters, extensive indices which include a Demotic glossary, a pharmacopoeia and a medical index, and photographs of the fragments.

The contents and structure resemble some of the great medical works of Pharaonic times, especially the Ebers papyrus, in that it aims to provide the physician with methods of treatment, but, more importantly, it instructs herbalists in the preparation of remedies. An affinity with Greek medical knowledge is obvious and it seems likely that Egyptian medicine, mainly the practice of herbalists, was influencing Greek doctors in Alexandria. Here then could be the origin of some of Dioscorides' and Pliny's *materia medica*, and in fact, close parallels can be demonstrated.

This text is therefore of dual significance: it reveals Egyptian medical practice in the Graeco-Roman period of the second half of the second century A.D.; and it contributes to our understanding of the interchange of medical knowledge between Ancient Egyptian, Roman, and Greek. By so doing, it opens up two avenues of research, which will be followed by experts with the possibility of exciting advances in the field of ancient medicine. Their studies will be facilitated by the work of Dr. Reymond, and if they emulate her high level of scholarship their achievements will be considerable.

DENO JOHN GEANAKOPOLOS, *Byzantium and the Renaissance. Greek scholars in Venice. Studies in the dissemination of Greek learning from Byzantium to Western Europe*, Hamden, Conn., Shoe String Press (Archon Books), 1973, 8vo, pp. xvi, 348, \$13.50.

One of the most difficult tasks in the history of medicine is to understand the transmission of Ancient Greek learning to the Renaissance in the West. This book, a reprint of the 1962 edition, is an outstanding contribution to the problem in general and provides extensive background detail which helps in tackling the particular difficulties concerning medical and scientific learning. It is based on extensive research, and its readability and meticulous documentation are further attractions. Professor Geanakoplos of Yale University, a renowned Byzantinist, divides his book into two parts, dealing first with background and then with six individual disseminators of Greek knowledge. It has already become a definitive work and must be studied carefully by all those involved with Renaissance medicine and science.