

Book Reviews

ALEXANDER SIDERAS (editor and translator), *Rufi Ephesii De Renum et Vesicae Morbis*, (Corpus Medicorum Graecorum III.1), Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1977, 8vo, pp. 190, M.48.00

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The achievements of Rufus of Ephesus, fl. A.D. 110, one of the few physicians whom Galen respected, have almost entirely vanished under the voluminous learning of his successor. Many of his writings are lost, fragments of others can be recovered from later encyclopaedists in Greek and Arabic, and even the tracts which survive suffer from a complicated and frequently deficient textual tradition. Yet there is enough to confirm Galen's verdict—solid practical advice, clinical astuteness, shrewd observation, clear, no-nonsense descriptions, and an underplaying of his personal attitudes and successes—a far cry from the often repetitive and verbose egoism of Galen.

'On diseases of the kidneys and bladder' is his most important surviving therapeutic work, and as informative as one would expect from a doctor who was, as he modestly says, "highly experienced". Afflictions are identified by their symptoms; the results of leaving them untreated are carefully set out; and appropriate therapy is prescribed—pain-killing drugs (I 15–16) or surgery (IX 7–13). The successes of his (largely unknown) predecessors are dutifully acknowledged—Euryodes, Cleombrotus, and Philomelus, the last for an ingenious but simple method of stimulating urination in a case of inflammation of the bladder (VI 7).

Professor Sideras has provided an accurate translation into German and a text that is far superior to that of Daremberg-Ruelle of 1879. By using the quotations embedded in later authors, he has been able to supplement many of the gaps in the manuscript tradition, and by accurate collation to give a sounder account of the unique source Ms., *M*. Where doubts remain of the correctness of the Greek, they affect the style of the treatise, not its medical content. Sideras has attempted to reduce Rufus' *Fachsprache* to a standard *koine* Greek, abolishing Attic forms such as *marathon* and Ionicisms such as *akrea* (p. 52) and occasionally introducing superfluous particles (e.g. 98.10; 100.11 (cf. 112.12); 156.4 (cf. 128.5)). But technical treatises cannot always be judged as models of stylistic uniformity, and the Ionicisms in a medical text may be deliberately archaizing allusions to Hippocrates: Kudlien's argument for other Hippocratica such as *exileōsai* (120.14) and *lignematos* (128.13) is too lightly disregarded. At times Sideras' desire to emend only produces ugliness (128.13, where, failing Kudlien's suggestion, one should at least read *hōs* for *hoti*; 136.2; 154.6); at others he leaves probable emendations in the apparatus (110.10; 114.2; 116.7; 130.50); while at 122.5 I prefer the reading of Aetius and [Galen] (*estērigmenoi*), which is omitted from the apparatus. At 164.9 the deletion of the first comma makes the sentence clearer.

The printing of this expensive book is almost impeccable but the layout of the apparatus and the testimonia is at times confusing. The testimonia comprise references not only to quotations, paraphrases and excerpts of the tract in other writings and to obvious borrowings of Rufus from extant authors, but also to other passages which have only slight bearing on the text, such as Theophrastus' and Dioscorides' descrip-

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tions of medical plants (124.1–6). It would have been clearer if these illustrative references had been separated from the testimonia proper and collected under the translation on the facing page.

In the apparatus criticus the testimonia receive inconsistent and at times misleading treatment. Often an emendation is recorded as made “after Aetius and [Galen]”; yet without their actual words, it is impossible to tell where they offer a direct quotation or a paraphrase reintegrated by the editor. Elsewhere the evidence of later citations is omitted (e.g. 112.1; 122.5, where the reading of Aetius and [Galen] is preferable to that adopted in the text and, at worst, provided the inspiration for Sideras’ emendation). Daremberg’s transposition of the title to “kidneys and bladder” may be further supported by the fact that the Arabs referred to it similarly and not, as the Greek Mss. have it, to “bladder and kidneys”, yet of this the apparatus gives not a word and the introduction, p. 69f., is misleading. As a result, this edition, which is likely to remain standard for at least as long as Daremberg’s, is less comprehensive than it at first appears, and can only be properly used with other texts open at hand and with Sideras’ 1971 Mainz *Abhandlung* available as a constant defence of emendations and disputed readings.

[FIRMICUS MATERNUS], *Ancient astrology, theory and practice. The Mathesis of Firmicus Maternus*, translated by Jean Rhys Bram, Park Ridge, N.J., Noyes Press, 1975, pp. xi, 336, illus., \$10.00.

The hopes and fears of the average man in classical antiquity are better studied from the predictions of an astrologer than from the chronicles of a historian. “What career shall I choose?” “Shall I recover from my illness?” “Whom should I marry?” The answers to such questions were found in the stars, not the archives. Even Galen believed in the influence of astral periodicities, if suitably rationalized (I.54; IX.911 K.; CMG V.10.2.2.244, 485) and Firmicus Maternus’ handbook, written c. A.D. 334, contains plenty of advice for the star-dominated invalid: Mars in Scorpio, Capricorn, Pisces or Cancer, if in opposition to the Moon, brings on impetigo, leprosy and jaundice (7.20.10).

Professor Bram has performed a useful service by making this fascinating work available in English, although the translation is not always fluent. ‘Malefic’ and ‘benefic’ are ugly and unnecessary alternatives to ‘male-’ and ‘beneficent’; ‘regularly elected consuls’ (3.3.10; 5.2; 13.9) requires more elucidation than the note on p. 304; and *campi doctores* (8.28.1) should be translated ‘drill instructors’, not ‘army doctors’.

Emperors might try to ban astrology, and philosophers despise it: Firmicus’ clients, whether high-born consuls or sweaty sewer-cleaners, knew better. Readers of *Medical History* should therefore be warned that (8.25.10) those who have the ascendant in the 30th degree of Libra will be verbose liars, inflated with fluent speech; or, if beneficent planets are conjoined, great physicians who travel much and die a violent death.

EBERHARD HERMES (translator and editor), *The ‘Disciplina clericalis’ of Petrus Alfonsi*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, 8vo, pp. x, 203, £5.95.

In 1106 a Jewish physician and theologian from Huesca in Aragon embraced the