THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IN ANCIENT ROME*

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IN ancient Rome, as in all primitive societies, the practice of medicine began as a mixture of magic and religion, and remained almost entirely so until the time of Cato. Tacitus speaks of Rome as "a city where superstition interpreted everything," and said that Vespasian cured a blind man with his spittle, and a paralysed limb by treading on it. Western medicine even today has some religious and magical elements, religious restrictions still exert their influence in modern practice, and we use such new names as "psychosomatic," "complexes," and "conditioned reflexes," to describe ideas that the ancients ascribed to magic.

The idea of magician-priest-physician was a logical concept. If the magician-priest can foretell events and placate the gods, he should be able to diagnose disease, prognosticate its course, and bring divine intervention for its cure. This, of course, has to do with internal diseases, but wounds and injuries occur in all communities, and for the treatment of these, empirical methods are usually quickly evolved. In early medicine, therefore, surgery tends to be more efficient than medical therapy.

Our knowledge of Etruscan medicine is vague and uncertain. Divination played an important part, and it was based upon the examination of the viscera of animals, especially the liver. The augurs were members of a religious college whose function was to interpret signs of approval or disapproval of the gods in reference to any proposed undertaking. There were many methods, but an important one was the examination of the entrails of sacrificial animals. Anything abnormal was brought to the attention of the augurs, but its interpretation was usually left to the Etruscan Haruspices. Castiglioni suggests that the Latin word "haruspex" possibly comes from the Chaldean "har" meaning liver.

Although divination was employed for the interpretation of the will of the gods and for prognosis in disease, more rational methods of treatment were also known. The beneficial effects of the thermal waters of ancient Etruria had been known from very early times. Castiglioni states that there is some evidence that the Etruscans knew of the relationship of marshy lands to certain fevers. They had some dental knowledge, for dental work by means of gold wire has been found among Etruscan remains. Theophrastus quotes Aeschylus as saying that Etruria is rich in medicine, and that the Etruscan race is one that cultivates the practice of medicine.

From early days the Romans had some measures of public hygiene. There was strict supervision of prostitution. Burial of the dead within the city walls was forbidden by the law of the twelve tables. There was an adequate water supply in Rome from early times, and this was gradually extended. It has been estimated

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that in the time of the Empire more than one hundred gallons per person daily were available, in addition to that used in the public baths. This is greater than the available supply of large modern cities, but Carcopino has pointed out that in very few instances was any of this supply available in the houses of the ordinary citizen. Although the Roman sewage system took care of the public latrines it did not take care of those in private houses, the poorer householder had recourse to diverse methods of taking care of this need. Juvenal refers to the occasional unfortunate consequences for the passer-by. Even in the time of Trajan open malodorous trenches were still in existence. Up to the year 300 B.C. people drank the water of the Tiber, but at that time the aquaduct of the Aqua Appia was constructed supplying a purer drinking water. Fifty years later a second aquaduct was built, and subsequently others. The drainage of swamps adjacent to the city was necessary and this work was at first supervised by the censors. In the time of Augustus special magistrates were appointed for this duty.

In the time of the kings and of the early Republic medicine was still almost entirely based upon magic. The Romans had a host of lesser deities held to be responsible for physiological functions, disorders of which could be righted by appropriate offerings. Even at this early time the Romans were close to the Sicilian schools, and had some contact with Greek civilization, so that some glimmering of Greek medicine must have reached them. Although there were so-called physicians in Rome from the fourth century B.C. there were no truly professional practitioners until the arrival of Greek physicians. The first of these was probably Archagathus of the Peloponnesus who established himself at Rome in 219 B.C. He is said to have received Roman citizenship. At first he achieved great popularity and was given the name "Vulnerarius," but later his reputation suffered because of his cruelty in surgery, and he became known as "Carnifex."

Cato (B.C. 234-149) was the great opponent of the introduction of all things Greek, and especially of Greek medicine. He spoke of the Greeks as "a scoundrel and incorrigible race." He practised medicine in his own household, and thought that cabbage was a universal remedy. If this vegetable, either internally or externally, would not cure a sick slave he recommended that the slave be sold. Pliny has described the familiar remedies which Cato used for family, slaves, and domestic animals. He sought to cure dislocations by reciting gibberish, the actual words were, "huat, hanat ista pista sista domina damnaustro luxato"; this incantation was to accompany the sacrifice of a white sparrow. According to Pliny, Cato, in his dislike of the Greek physicians, even accused them of poisoning the sick. As a result of his influence difficulties were raised against the immigration of Greek physicians. In spite of this they continued to arrive in Rome, and the practical-minded Roman soon recognized their superior knowledge and education.

With the downfall of the Alexandrian Empire, Alexandria became the centre of medical education and progress, for the Hellenic influence still remained vigorous there after the decline of Hellenic freedom. The Alexandrian school was characterized by erudition, idealism, and technical dexterity. After the absorption of Egypt into the Roman Empire, Alexandria rapidly declined in importance. Its school had previously made many advances in medical knowledge, and for some

time it still remained a centre of medical education. It is almost certain that dissection was allowed and physiological experiments carried out. Alexandria became the means of preserving Greek texts, and of spreading Greek teaching to the east. According to Ovid and Livy, the cult of Aesculapius was introduced into Rome in the form of a huge serpent from Epidaurus, representing the god in his Chthonian aspect, in the year 293 B.C., but, as we have seen, it was at a later date that the Greek physicians began to arrive.

The most eminent of them came from Asia Minor, from the schools of Pergamus, Ephesus, and Miletus. Greek medicine was finally established in Rome as a profession through the personality, tact, and superior ability of Asclepiades of Bithynia. He was born in 124 B.C. and came to Rome about 100 B.C. He was well educated, of unusual intellect, and had a pleasant personality. He became a friend of many important Romans. He taught rhetoric, but found it unprofitable. When he began the practice of medicine he found that this knowledge helped him enormously. He was enough of a charlatan to make a popular practitioner. He knew his Romans, and his treatment was pleasant. There were no emetics, drastic purgatives, or bitter medicine; his most frequent prescription was wine, and he advised rest, massage, and a swinging couch. If his patients died they died in comfort. Lucius Apuleius tells of a case where Asclepiades restored to life a supposedly dead man who was being carried to the already lighted funeral pyre. His theory of medicine was based upon the atomic philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus; he ascribed disease to changes in the relation of atoms and pores, and rejected the humoral doctrines. He said that people might cease to consider him a doctor if he were ever taken ill himself. He was fortunate in this matter for, according to Pliny, his death was due to a fall from a ladder.

Along with the educated physicians, quacks and charlatans of all kinds flocked to Rome. There were many so-called specialists, and it is probable that many of these were so ignorant that they pretended to special knowledge of some branch of medicine, and so were not called upon to expose their ignorance by attempting to deal with all diseases. Many of these practitioners travelled from place to place, as a fertile field for their activities existed outside of Rome. One of the commonest specialties was ophthalmology, but most of these practitioners were principally concerned with producing new eye salves which they stamped with their names. Nearly two hundred seals for this purpose have been found, many exhibiting incorrect spelling. A few of the able practitioners, and more of the quacks, became very wealthy. It is said that Zenophon, a court physician, received the equivalent of twenty-five thousand dollars a year from the Emperor, and complained that he could have obtained more in private practice. Charmis, a hydrotherapist, or water doctor, as they were called, of Marseilles, was paid ten thousand dollars by one patient. At the other extreme the less popular physicians were sometimes compelled to take more lucrative callings to escape starvation. Martial refers to one who became an undertaker's assistant,

"Dialus, who was once a surgeon,
Now assists an undertaker,
Here at length he finds the office
To which alone his skill is suited."

With an excess of trained physicians, as well as of disreputable practitioners, many evils arose. Scientific effort was abandoned, and medicine was practised only for material gain. Wealthy patients were flattered. Professional jealousy led to unseemly criticism of fellow practitioners. Galen complains, "There is no distinction between robbers and physicians, except that the former commit their misdeeds in the mountains, the latter in Rome." The public loved to be swindled then, as it does today, and Pliny says, "People who understand no Greek place no confidence in the physician who does not practice in the Grecian style; indeed, they have less confidence when they understand what serves to cure them." The Greek doctors who had been well trained were sought out, and, as a result, other practitioners were gradually compelled to learn what they could of Greek medicine. There was a great demand for Greek texts. Pompey, for instance, brought some Greek medical literature to Rome, and his freedman, Lenaeus, translated it into Latin. Thus we see that professional medicine in Rome was henceforward Greek, and its most prominent representatives belonged to the Greek nation.

What then was the position of the physician in Rome? As we have seen, the first practitioners to come to the city were Greek adventurers, and not the best representatives of Greek medical science. Their social status was low, for which there were many reasons. There was the opposition of men like Cato, and the low type of many so-called physicians only increased the innate contempt of the Romans for professional medicine. The teaching of rhetoric and philosophy, and practice in the law courts were thought to be the only professions worthy of the Roman patrician. Anyone was free to practise medicine without scrutiny of his qualifications. There was a close relationship between the poorer type of practitioner and the drug-sellers who dealt in love potions, cosmetics, abortifacients, and poisons. By the time of the Empire, even famous physicians lent themselves, often under duress, to the preparation of poisons for the emperors. Tacitus suggests that the personal physician of Claudius may possibly have assisted in the poisoning of that emperor. By the time of Theodosius the word "medicamentarius" meant "poisoner," although earlier it had meant only "drug-seller." According to Herodian, the first act of Caracalla was to order the execution of the court physicians because they refused to hasten the death of his father Severus (Withington). The Romans, by the way, knew many poisons, some acting quickly in small quantities. Prussic acid had been extracted from the kernel of the peach by the Egyptians. The Assyrians knew aconite, mandragora, hemp, and several mineral poisons such as arsenic, antimony, and copper. Pliny and other Latin authors used the word "cicuta" when alluding to the state poison of the Greeks; combined with opium it makes a very potent poison even in small quantities. There are at least twenty-five varieties of poisonous mushrooms. (*Amanita phalloides*) and probably most of these were known to the Romans, who were capable of extracting the essential poison. Theophrastus states that the most subtle poison was aconite.

With the gradual organization of medical study, which we shall shortly discuss, the social position of the physician improved. In 46 B.C. Julius Caesar granted the rights of Roman citizenship to all physicians, which ensured an increased dignity

to the practice of medicine. This was probably brought about by the need for trained surgeons in the army, and may have been preliminary to the establishment of an army medical service. At the close of the first century A.D. the city garrison consisted of twenty cohorts, each provided with four surgeons; the thirty legions had from six to ten surgeons each; the infantry and cavalry of the allies probably had surgeons of an inferior class, and the stationary camps of the standing army would be supplied with camp surgeons. In spite of the right of citizenship, the practice of medicine continued to be regarded as unworthy of a Roman patrician. Cicero says that the practice of medicine is commendable "to those whose rank and condition is suitable for such employment." Many physicians, however, quickly acquired wealth, and with it adopted a luxurious mode of living. They were then often accepted into patrician society. The immigration of the mediocre physicians, seeking fortunes, gave place to the arrival of more illustrious practitioners who were attracted by the glories of the great city. The satirical poets, for the most part, had only contempt for physicians, but the more serious writers gradually came to look upon them as worthy persons. An example is Quintilian who proposed the following case for debate: a man having three sons, a philosopher, a physician, and an orator, divides his property into four parts, and leaves the extra share to the one most useful to the state; which son should have it?

The social status of the physician slowly improved by the influence of the learned and honest practitioners. According to Suetonius, during a famine in Rome in 46 B.C. Caesar ordered the expulsion of all foreigners except teachers and doctors. Augustus in 10 A.D. granted doctors immunity from taxes and from many public duties. Vespasian confirmed this privilege, and Hadrian published rules defining these immunities. Antonius Pius, however, ordained that the privileges should not apply to all doctors, but only to a certain number of them, in smaller towns five, in the middle-sized ones seven, and in larger ones ten. Later the immunities applied only to public medical officers.

Let us now glance at the subject of the medical education of the physician in Rome. As we have noted, the gradual organization of medical study played a part in changing the social status of the physician. As medical practice was almost entirely in the hands of the Greeks, the education of the physician was Greek education, at least until the time of the Empire. Scientific medicine began with the Greeks. The scientific method begins with careful, objective observation, uninfluenced by subjective beliefs. The results of the observations are accurately recorded and systematically classified. From the data a law or theory is evolved by inductive reasoning. So far the Greeks went, but they did not take the final step of experimental verification of the theory. The mythical Aesculapius, to whom Pindar refers as "the son of Apollo by the nymph Coronis," was worshipped as a deity, and his most celebrated temples were at Cos, Cnidus, Pergamus, and Epidaurus. These shrines became popular sanitaria controlled by priest-physicians. They have been described by Aristophanes in a facetious manner, and by Walter Pater more sympathetically. The votive tablets at these shrines became a sort of clinical record. Pausanias mentions six of them when he visited the temple of Epidaurus in 150 B.C. Two of them, excavated in modern times, have very meagre details of symptoms and treatment. Nevertheless they must have

been of value in the gradual understanding of the course of many diseases. In addition to the priest-physicians there were practitioners not attached to the Aesculapian shrines. Moreover, medicine was studied, along with philosophy and rhetoric, as part of the general education. It was practised in some of its details by the "Gymnasts." Osler has observed that, "Greek medicine had a triple relationship with science, with gymnastics, and with theology." Before the time of Hippocrates it was regarded simply as a branch of philosophy, and Pythagoras (580-548 B.C.) included medicine in his philosophical writings. The Greek physician, therefore, began with a good general education, and his study of medicine consisted of observation from which there was evolved a very accurate description of the clinical course of many diseases. This was carried out under the tutelage of a priest-physician, or of a private practitioner. Before practice he took an oath based upon the finest ethical principles. Therapy was not based on any philosophical system, and consisted mostly of regulation of diet, rest, and hydrotherapy. In Rome this was soon changed, and treatment became based upon some system of philosophy.

By the time of the Republic, Roman instruction seems to have been conducted privately, and without any state control, yet medicine formed part of the general culture, and Athenaeus maintained that every cultured man should concern himself with its study. The organization of medical study began with the granting of citizenship to the physicians by Julius Caesar, and this was a check upon the activities of ill-trained and pseudo-physicians.

In southern Italy and in Sicily medical schools developed adjacent to, and under the influence of, philosophical schools, and to these many students travelled for instruction. The college of the Archiatri, which we shall shortly describe, outlined a course of instruction, and the physician who completed it was called "Medicus a Republica." Many students did not complete the course, but, nevertheless, set up in practice. Galen estimated that at least eleven years' study was necessary for the education of a competent physician. His contemporary and enemy, Thessalus, declared that six months' study was sufficient to make an excellent physician. Many of the students of Thessalus, says Galen, could neither read nor speak correctly. The Romans never saw any usefulness in disinterested research. They collected previous writings and made encyclopaedias of science without ever trying to verify the opinions expressed. Towards the end of the Empire there was certainly public instruction in medicine, and by the time of Hadrian (331-6 A.D.) physicians had their place in the Athenaeum.

Just how a distinct medical class was brought about we do not know. Puschmann suggests that the necessity for skilled medical men in the army was a factor. Tacitus says that in more ancient times the soldiers carried bandages, and each took part in the care of the wounded. Livy states that, after the battle of Sutrium in 309 B.C., more soldiers died of wounds subsequently than were killed in battle, yet even at that time medicine was practised as a profession in Rome, as attested by the same author. It is rather interesting to note that, although anyone was free to practise medicine if he could obtain patients, yet, as Carcopino points out, barbers were not permitted to set up shop until they had completed

an adequate apprenticeship. Romans might trust their health, but not their faces, to the untrained.

A true organization of medical study in Rome dates from the commencement of the third century when Alexander Severus (225–35 A.D.) instituted special schools for the teaching of medicine, and granted stipends to the teachers and assigned them public lecture rooms. The study consisted of mammalian anatomy, the examination of wounds, medical botany, and some clinical instruction. The latter was often given in the house of the patient, about which Martial has to say,

“Faint was I only, Symmachus, till thou,
Backed by an hundred students, throng’dst at my bed;
An hundred icy fingers chilled my brow.
I had no fever; now I’m nearly dead.”

At a later period the Archiatri, more than others, appear to have devoted themselves to the business of teaching. The duration of study depended upon the ability, desire, and wealth of the student. The art of medicine was more profitable, and less laborious to learn, than was its science, therefore men like Thessalus looked with contempt on the theoretical side of medicine. From the time of Galen anatomy became more and more important, but there was little interest in physiology. *Materia medica* was an important study, and Dioscorides, a Greek army surgeon in the service of Nero, was one of the greatest of the medical botanists. He listed about five hundred plants so accurately that most of them can be recognized today. Most doctors prepared their own medicines, and Pliny says that the ordinary public believed that the most expensive remedies were also the most potent for good. By the time of Galen medicine and surgery were separate subjects of education, and few doctors practised both. Celsus mentions many surgeons by name. The Roman surgeon of Galen’s time had much sound knowledge, and performed even major operations requiring anatomical knowledge and technical skill. He had many surgical instruments; about an hundred of these have been recovered in the excavations at Pompeii. Celsus says that ligatures and torsion of vessels were used when simpler methods of arresting haemorrhage failed. Whether artificial limbs were in use is a question on which there is much argument, but Lucian refers to artificial feet made of figtree wood. A law, said to have been made by Numa Pompilius, ordained that Caesarean section should be performed on women dying in labour in order, if possible, to save the life of the child. Pliny says it was carried out also on living women, and that Scipio Africanus owed his life to this operation. There were some female doctors, and in one collection of epitaphs Carcopino found reference to four women physicians along with fifty-one men.

Although anyone was free to practise medicine in Rome without examination of his qualifications, yet for the public sanitary service, and for admission to the Archiatriate, examination was necessary. So, in practice, there was a distinction between trained and untrained doctors. Probably most of the specialists belonged to the latter group, as they were men who were unwilling to take the necessary training, or were incapable of mastering it. Today the specialist is a well-trained

physician who has added a long special training to his basic medical education.

There was a friendly relationship between the best physicians and surgeons, and consultation was common. The social position of the surgeon was not inferior to that of the physician, as it became later.

Prognosis, meaning a description of the course of a disease and its probable outcome, was of great importance to the Roman physician. There were two reasons for this. Little was known about efficient therapy, and the idea of suicide was not opprobrious. If, therefore, one were suffering from a painful disease that would probably end fatally, it was not shameful that he should take his own life at a moment and in a manner of his own choosing.

By the time of the Emperor Claudius (41-54 A.D.) the order of the Imperial Archiatri had arisen. The Archiatriate at one time was thought to be a purely Roman institution, but the office, as well as the name, appears to be Greek. Historians distinguish several classes of Archiatri, but are not agreed on the number. The Palatine Archiatri were court physicians, and public health and the care of the poor were assigned to the Archiatri Populares of five, seven, or ten communal physicians in each city, according to its size. About 378 A.D. an Archiater was appointed to each of the fourteen districts of Rome by the Emperor Valentinian. In addition, several physicians were designated for the Porticos, and for the College of Vestal Virgins. All of these physicians were under the control of the central government, and were elected by vote of the existing members of the Archiatri. Some of the court physicians received handsome salaries, but were debarred from private practice. The Archiatri Populares were permitted private practice, and instructed students, for a fee if the students were able to pay, gratis if they were not. At first ordinary physicians enjoyed almost equal privileges with the Archiatri, but later their rights were more circumscribed. The Palatine Archiatri played an important part in political life. The title—Archiater—was sometimes given to celebrated physicians who were not connected with the court or with the public medical service. The Society of Archiatri served as a model for the medical guilds of surgeons.

We may now consider briefly the outstanding writers and practitioners. We have seen that the influence of Asclepiades established Roman medicine on a firm foundation. Themison, who was one of his pupils, founded the school of the Methodists. Juvenal refers to him in derogatory terms. This school attempted to confine medicine to rigid doctrines, the basic one being that all disease comes from a state either of tension, or relaxation. It was found necessary later to introduce a third concept to explain symptoms, so the system eventually recognized "status strictus," "status latus," and "status mixtus." Therapy consisted in combatting these states. The system is simple, lends itself to easy explanations, and, because of its simplicity, met with favour by the common people.

The licentiousness of Imperial Rome, with widespread immorality, and abnormal sexual practices among all ranks, would be expected to give rise to venereal diseases, although syphilis was probably unknown.

Gynaecology was one of the specialties practised in the Empire, and Soranus of Ephesus was the author of one of the most important treatises on obstetrics and the diseases of women written before modern times. It was the basis of

Roslin's *Rosengarten* published in 1513, and of Raynalde's *Byrthe of Mankynde* in 1545. Soranus instructed midwives to keep their fingernails trimmed, and to be circumspect in their bearing. He believed that the most favourable period for conception was just after a menstrual period, a belief which persisted until very recently. A three-bladed gynaecological speculum has been recovered in the ruins of Pompeii, which was destroyed in his time. The knowledge of this instrument was lost in the Middle Ages, and was rediscovered only in 1815. The chapter on the anatomy of the female pelvis is the most important one in Soranus' book.

The best we have of Roman medicine is the work of Celsus. He was one of the greatest of the Latin medical writers, but it is a matter of controversy whether he ever practiced medicine. The Loeb Library points out that it was not unusual for a Roman gentleman to have a fairly intimate knowledge of medicine, but its practice was looked upon as beneath his dignity. On the other hand, Celsus expresses his opinion as to the treatment of symptoms by using the first person of the verb, and often uses the emphatic "ego." Moreover, he writes of patients he knew personally, and attended even by night. He was classed by Pliny among the men of letters, and was ignored by contemporary practitioners, who thought that a Roman could not know much medicine. His is the oldest medical document after the Hippocratic writings, and, of the seventy-two medical authorities mentioned by him, only the work of Hippocrates has come down to us relatively intact. He was the first to translate Greek medical terms into Latin, and the nomenclature which he began still persists. He criticized both the Empiricists, who pretended to cure all diseases by means of drugs, and the Methodists who supposedly cured them all by diet and exercise. An indication that dissection was allowed in Rome at that time is seen in his statement, "To open the bodies of the dead is necessary to learners." He distinguished accurately between the quotidian, tertian, and quartan fevers of malaria. His work was the first attempt at a history of medicine.

Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.) was not a physician, but Books 20 to 32 of his *Natural History* deal exclusively with medicine. There are references to scurvy, superfoetation, and even to the possible use of an eye-glass by Nero. He says, "Nero princeps gladiatorum pugnas spectabit in smaragdo." Smaragdus, of course, means an emerald, and it is possible that he was gazing through some mineral which might have been ground to magnify. Neuberger notes that reading a passage in Pliny about the use of the juice, anagallis, before operating for cataract gave Himly the idea of investigating the action of belladonna on the pupil.

The greatest of the Latin physicians and writers was Galen (131-200 A.D.) who retained the position of medical dictator of the western world for a thousand years. His medical hypotheses were based upon the philosophy of Aristotle, were acceptable to the Church, and hence remained unassailable for centuries. He was the son of an architect, and had studied philosophy until the age of twenty, when his medical education began. It is the opinion of Baas that Galen was more of a savant and teacher than practitioner, but we know that his practice was extensive and excellent. He was an investigator with a true scientific spirit.

His chief physiological work was the investigation of the nervous system, and he distinguished sensory, motor, and mixed nerves. He produced hemiplegia by section of the spinal cord, and aphonia by cutting the recurrent laryngeal nerves. His first court case was the cure of Marcus Aurelius of a stomach-ache due to eating too much cheese. His knowledge of anatomy in a celebrated case led him to diagnose a lesion of the spinal cord in a patient who had sensory paralysis of one half of his hand. There are several interesting stories of his astuteness. One concerns a lady with an ill-defined disability and no symptoms. With his finger on her pulse he engaged her in conversation, during which he made casual mention of a popular actor named Pylades, and her pulse immediately accelerated. He repeated his observation on another day, and arrived at the correct diagnosis of "love-sickness." Hippocrates had separated medicine from philosophy; the aim of Galen was to unite them.

There are many sidelights on Roman medicine by non-medical writers. Plautus and Terence have several references to obstetrics. Lucretius refers to anatomy, physiology, and dietetics, as well as giving us the famous account of the plague in Rome. Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius refer to sexual vices, venereal disease, aphrodisiacs, and cosmetics. Virgil described anthrax in sheep. Mosquito netting (*conopium*) is mentioned by Horace and Juvenal.

Should we attribute to Roman civilization a decisive effect upon the progress of medical science, or should we regard Roman medicine as essentially Greek medicine? Most recent historians are of the latter opinion. It should be remembered, however, that if scientific medicine made little progress in Rome, it was there that the rules of hygiene were codified, and legal medicine had its beginning. Rome devised excellent sanitation and water supplies, organized medical care of the poor, and medical services for the armed forces. Scientific and theoretical medicine deteriorated, but practical and technical medicine advanced. The work of the encyclopaedists has preserved for us some of the contents of texts which disappeared in antiquity. The productive genius of the Greeks was lacking for the Romans were deficient in creative imagination, yet, under them, surgery, including obstetrics and ophthalmology, attained a degree of excellence which it was not to reach again before the sixteenth century.