

merous illustrations of good quality, both photographs (mostly in black-and-white, but there are also eight colour plates), plans and maps as well as a helpful genealogical chart of the family of Augustus.

*Kaj Sandberg*

FIK MEIJER: *Emperors Don't Die in Bed*. Translated by S. J. LEINBACH. Routledge, London – New York 2004. ISBN 0-415-31201-9 (hb), 0-415-31202-7 (pb). VIII, 183 pp. GBP 14.99.

The last days and deaths of prominent or powerful persons have always fascinated people's taste for the macabre. The history of the Roman Emperors is in this respect very rewarding. It offers an endless series of violent or extraordinary deaths, which have been chronicled numerous times from Suetonius and the *Historia Augusta* to the present day. Even if the death were quite natural, there often have been rumors and suspicions about the real cause of death. The emperors' unusual and painful illnesses leading to death have also been found attractive in people's imagination.

In his book, Fik Meijer tells us about Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Romulus Augustulus in 2–4 page long chapters, showing the miserable fates of each Roman ruler. The most notable exception among all the violent deaths is Antoninus Pius, whose "final hours were in perfect harmony with his reign" (p. 58). Exceptions are also Diocletian, who abdicated from office after a reign of over 20 years, and Romulus Augustulus, who got a pension at the admirable age of fifteen, having been emperor less than a year.

Meijer also quotes the last words of the dying emperors and mentions the places where they were buried or what happened to their bodies. It is one of the ironies of history that the pagan emperor Julian the Apostate found his final resting place in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople (p. 133). The descriptions of the illnesses of the emperors are not without grotesque features, especially when the description is made by a Christian author, like Lactantius' account of the fatal illness of Galerius (p. 114). A very detailed account is given of the death of Emperor Valentinian. Meijer's short sentences are in accordance with the last reactions of the body of the dying emperor: "His body convulsed; he hiccupped and hacked; he gnashed his teeth and his fists punched helplessly at the air. A short time later he expired." (pp. 136–7)

Fik Meijer's book is very handy as a repetition course for everybody interested in the history and fate of the Roman emperors. Meijer presents the 87 emperors in chronological order; for some reason, Maximinus the Thracian is presented after Gordian I and Gordian II and Diocletian as the last of the members of the tetrarchy. Along with the short biographies, the dates of lifetimes and reigns as well short lists of principal ancient sources are given. It is, however, regrettable that the complete names of the emperors are not given anywhere. The author appeals to readability (p. 6), but the complete names could, of course, have been listed together with the dates, without repeating them every time. The book also contains the family trees of the Julio-Claudian and Antonine emperors, two maps and a selected bibliography.

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