REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Robert Browning, *Justinian and Theodora.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 171. Pp. 272 and numerous illustrations.

With the possible exception of the reign of Augustus no period of the Roman empire has been more intensely studied than that of Justinian. One would have supposed, however, that after Diehl, Bury, Stein, the detailed and laborious studies of Rubin, and a number of much briefer general account of Justinian's reign that there would be no need for another book. That indeed was my reaction when I first saw the announcement of the publication of the present book. But now that I have read it, I am convinced that it will serve a useful purpose, that among the brief general accounts on Justinian available, it will prove the most appealing. This is because of the succinctness of the narrative, the careful analysis of men and event, the numerous and varied illustrations in black and white and in color, and the general soundness of its interpretations. The author is a well known figure among Byzantine scholars in the world.

The narrative is brief, but with the illustrations, it covers well the different phases and varied activities of Justinian's reign. For those whose knowledge of the later Roman Empire might be very elementary the introduction, covering the period from the reign of Constantine the Great to the end of that of Anastasius I, will prove very useful. The rest of the narrative, consisting of ten chapters, passes in review the various aspects of Justinian's reign: his foreign policy and the military activities which ensued; his building activities; the codification of Roman law; the internal and ecclesiastical conditions; the barbarian invasion of the Balkan peninsula and Justinian's relations with Persia. Most interesting is the chapter devoted to the men around Justinian. Theodora's influences is emphasized throughout the book. In the epilogue the author evaluates Justinian's reign and takes a position halfway between those who in the light of the great Roman tradition justify Justinian's foreign policy and those who in the light of subsequent developments condemn it.

The book, except for several misprints, is remarkably free of mistakes, but the quality of the illustrations, exceptional for their variety, could have been better. This is particularly true of those in color.

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