



## The Rise and Fall of Modern Medicine. James Le Fanu

*By James Le Fanu*

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### **The Rise and Fall of Modern Medicine. James Le Fanu** By James Le Fanu

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"Much current medical advice is quackery," cautions Le Fanu in this remarkably engrossing scholarly study of medical progress and the recent lack thereof in the 20th century. Le Fanu (a medical columnist for London's Daily and Sunday Telegraph) contemplates what he sees as the unhappy situation of contemporary health care. The decades from the 1940s to the 1980s saw some of the most critically important advances Western medicine has seen, from penicillin to the heart pump that made open-heart surgery possible. Yet doctors are disillusioned, and patients are turning in droves to alternative forms of medicine. How has this dilemma come about? Le Fanu first details the astonishing breakthroughs of the earlier part of the 20th century (he describes, for instance, the progress made by the first patient ever administered penicillin). But, more controversially, he argues that since the 1980s medical progress has been crippled by two developments, which he terms "Social Theory" and "New Genetics," respectively: according to the author, misguided epidemiologists promote a lifestyle changes (low-cholesterol diet, etc.) as a means of preventing heart disease; and geneticists have misled us into thinking that their research breakthroughs can eliminate genetic diseases. Both cases have been overstated, Le Fanu contends, drawing on a wealth of scientific data to attempt to show that dietary changes have done little to prevent heart disease and that genetic experiments, despite "millions of hours of research," have had "scarcely detectable" practical results. He concludes with a plea to return to the traditional in the practice of medicine—the relationship between doctor and patient—and to a renewal of faith in the diagnostic skill and judgment of one's personal physician. B&w photos. Agent, Caroline Dawnay. (July)

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From Kirkus Reviews

English physician and Daily Telegraph columnist Le Fanu writes a thoughtful history of the only 20th-century revolution that turned out brilliantly. During the century before 1940, people grew healthier and lived longer through improved hygiene, housing, and nutrition. Once they got sick, however, doctors weren't that much help: except for a few treatments (such as thyroid hormone, insulin, and vitamins) a patient got better pretty much on his own—or he didn't. WWII marked the beginning of a torrent of miraculous advances. To label these miracles is no hype. Dreadfully sick people received penicillin, cortisone, or lithium—and suddenly they weren't sick. Every single child who contracted leukemia in 1950 died; today almost all live. Victims of congenital heart disease or kidney failure lived as pitiful invalids if they lived at all; now they live normally. This was a wonderful period full of heroes, and Le Fanu describes it superbly in the first half of his story. Then he grows sober, thoughtful, and pessimistic. Medicine's golden age peaked in the 1960s, he writes. Important discoveries trailed off after 1970, introduction of genuinely new drugs dropped sharply, and two disturbing trends appeared. He calls one the Social Theory. Misled by triumphs of the golden age (proof that smoking causes cancer and treating hypertension prevents strokes), doctors embraced a utopian theory of prevention with enthusiasm unaccompanied by proof. Readers will be jolted by the author's claim that diet, lifestyle, and pollution contribute only marginally to ill health. Obsessive efforts to fine-tune our diet and environment (medical correctness) have, in Le Fanu's view, produced little beside anxiety. The author also takes a dim view of the New Genetics: science's fascination with DNA, genetic engineering, and genetic therapy. He points out that 20 years of expensive research, media obsession, and wildly optimistic claims have produced only minor benefits to patients. Le Fanu's doubts about prevention and genetic engineering place him in the minority among laymen as well as doctors, but he makes a convincing case in this readable and informative account. -- *Copyright © 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

## Review

Stand by for a brilliant read ... will send your heart palpitating and your blood pressure rising from the start  
Daily Mail Has the great knack of making even the most complex technical developments exciting and  
intelligible Observer A major achievement The Tablet Epic and entertaining. The Lancet

## Users Review

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This book untitled The Rise and Fall of Modern Medicine. James Le Fanu to be one of several books this best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this publication you can get a lot of benefit onto it. You will easily to buy that book in the book retail store or you can order it via online. The publisher on this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quickly to read this book, since you can read this book in your Cell phone. So there is no reason to you personally to past this publication from your list.

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