pneumatic chemistry was a culprit, and in the nineteenth century first 'animal chemistry' and then bacteriology added to the chaos. Two general rules seem to be that whenever a new medical theory came into vogue, its principal tenets were applied to scurvy and that whenever theory was particularly prominent basic facts became fuzzy and distorted — chastening but not unpredictable lessons from medical history.

There is much to admire in *The History of Scurvy and Vitamin C*, for Carpenter has told his story well. Particularly noteworthy are his accounts of James Lind's classic experiments with eighteenth century British seamen ["probably the first controlled trial in clinical nutrition" (p.52)] followed by Lind's disappointing experience, the puzzles associated with the occurrence of scurvy in Arctic exploration, and the exploitation of the guinea pig [unquestionably patterned on the use of (animal models) in bacteriological investigation] which in the early twentieth century provided a rigorous experimental method for the systematic study of scurvy as a nutritional deficiency disease and for the isolation of Vitamin C. There is even passing allusion to the commercal exploitation beginning in the 1930s and to the sometimes dangerous fads and fantasies of the sixties and seventies. Any one of these topics could have been developed in a fuller and more subtle intellectual, institutional and socioeconomic context, but it is a credit to Carpenter that they are mentioned at all, often with appetite — whetting suggestiveness and up-to-date scholarly references. Carpenter's history is, after all, a survey, and like most surveys it at times sacrifices depth for breadth and the overarching sense of authority. But successful surveys, like this one, educate their readers while alerting them to vast areas yet to be explored.

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Margaret DeLacy — *Prison Reform in Lancashire, 1700-1850: A Study in Local Administration.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986.

In this exceptionally well-written account of the development of Lancashire's county gaols between 1700 and 1850, Dr. DeLacy affirms that recent historical work on penal institutions in this period is in need of revision. DeLacy maintains that county goals in isolated and rural county Lancashire were not notoriously cruel or unhealthy. Humane and well- intentioned justices embarked on building programs and up to 1780 provided prisoners with assistance which was "adequate if not generous". This assessment, which downplays the horrors of the 18th century gaol, undercuts the thesis, developed most fully by Michael Ignatieff in *A Just Measure of Pain* (1978), that there was a significant break from the past in the late 18th century in the history of the prison. Ignatieff's radical critique suggests that middle class reformers, revolted by the physical conditions in English gaols, promoted the erection of penitentiaries whose regimes were more uniform, repressive and efficient than the ones they swept away.

Although conscious of the continuity of the reforming tradition behind Lancashire's county gaols, DeLacy freely admits county gaols faced an unprecedented demographic crisis in the 1780s which eventually resulted in the emergence of a new penal regime. There was an urgent need for additional accommodation at a time when imprisonment became an increasingly popular secondary punishment for all types of offenses. The author reminds us that numbers dictate the quality of prison life, as witnessed in the 1780s when prisoners in Lancashire faced starvation and typhus epidemics as a result of overcrowding. This crisis was met by the expansion and renovation of prisons, and the slow introduction of rules aimed at combating poor physical conditions and lax discipline. Again, DeLacy opposes the views of recent radical interpretations that place an emerging bourgeoisie, guided by the model of the factory, at the centre of this reform movement. In Lancashire, penal administration

and reform remained firmly in the hands of local magistrates who initiated the ideas of a small group of dedicated reformers. The stake of the gentry in penal reform was paramount as that body paid disproportionate amount of the rates which increased ten times between 1780 and a reassessment in 1815.

Moreover, DeLacy takes exception to the view that these reforms were necessarily detrimental to the inmates. The local justices, starved of funds and overwhelmed by the flood of prisoners provided prisons that were more secure and equitable. 'Benevolent' magistrates gave increased respect for human life as prisoners were better protected from each other and their mortality was preserved by the containment of disease. The author, however, is careful to point out that these changes in prison life involved "trade offs" at every point. For example, in an illuminating discussion of the changes in prison diet, DeLacy shows that the composition of a uniform diet, saved prisoners in marginal gaols from starvation. There is evidence of voluntary admissions to gaols where inmates sometimes enjoyed a diet superior to that found in many workhouses. However, prisoners could no longer supplement their diet with gifts from the outside, and their death rate increased as they fell victim to the principle of less eligibility that often led officials to cut prison diets.

Prisons in the first half of the 19th century became more severe and prisoners faced more mental stress and more uncertain sentences. DeLacy reveals how the communal life of the prison was restricted as prisoners became more isolated from each other and from the wider community. As advocates of contagionism, they believed that typhus in particular was spread by close physical contact which should be reduced to the minimum.

The author links this move toward isolationism with the slow increase in the power of the gaoler of Lancaster Castle who triumphed over the vocal opposition of political radicals interned in his gaol in the first third of the 19th century. These political prisoners championed the civil rights and fair treatment of all prisoners and their complaints were aired in Parliament and the local press. On the key issue of whether the gaoler was allowed to censor prisoners' mail the authorities won the day. This official victory demonstrated that by the mid-19th century prisons were increasingly cut off from the community. Shrouded by an "iron curtain" prisons were no longer open to public scrutiny and were run by autocratic governors who became more accountable to the Home Office than to the local justices. Lancashire's judges lost their autonomy as they accepted funds from the central government by the 1840s.

DeLacy, however, warns against any interpretation of penal administration before 1840 that concentrates purely on national or metropolitan institutions and initiatives. She takes exception to Ignatieff's depiction of Pentonville, where prisoners were faced with severe discipline and systematic manipulation in separate cells, as a typical model that should be applied elsewhere in the country. In Lancashire's county gaols the process of reform was very slow and discipline was often lax because prisoners were poorly supervised by too few warders. DeLacy notes that although prisoners often ignored the rules in Lancaster Castle, a generally humane staff inflicted very low levels of punishment. Even in Preston gaol, where the zealous reformer John Clay, was chaplain, the regime was compromised. Clay, forced by financial exigencies, relented enough to accept the continuation of productive labor, although he believed that work detracted from spiritual needs that lay at the heart of rehabilitation. The provision of a separate cell for each prisoner could only be partially realized as it was well beyond the means of the Lancashire rate payers.

This impressive account of a provincial prison system, based on a thorough knowledge of local archives, could profitably be read in conjunction with John Beattie's account of imprisonment in Surrey and Sussex in his *Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1880* (1986). Both authors stress the continuity between the early and later part of the century but note the gradual movement away from physical punishments led to an increase of imprisonment and transportation. Beattie connects these changes in punishment to the rising number of prosecutions and to the discretion exercised by judges during sentencing, who selected from the wide range of non-capital punishments available to them. DeLacy, by taking the prison as the central theme of her account, only hints at these wider

changes in the system of criminal justice, which Beattie firmly places at the centre of his re- evaluation of punishment in the 18th century.

This account shows the diverse and complex forces at work in the process of penal reform and warns the historian to be wary of any simplistic analysis based on social control. The author cautions against the wholesale acceptance of the inevitability of the emergence of a new micropower brought about by new experts. DeLacy suggests this approach to penal history is as hazardous as clinging to the traditional Whiggish view that certain stages of reform represented "progress" which eventually culminated in the present penal system.

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Laurence Fontaine — *Le voyage et la mémoire. Colporteurs de l'Oisans au XIXème siècle*. Lyon, Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1984, 294 p.

L'étude du « colporteur » fut longtemps abandonnée à quelques folkloristes qui en tracèrent un portrait romancé, flou et pas trop impressionniste. L'historien hésitait à entreprendre une recherche sur un petit personnage qui avait laissé bien peu de papiers derrière lui. Léon Cahen n'écrivit-il pas en 1939, à propos du colporteur du XVIII[ème] siècle: « il existe un degré au-dessous duquel l'historicité ne descend pas » (*Annales d'Histoire sociale*, t.I, no.3, 1939, p.244)? Le marchand ambulant semblait condamné à l'oubli. Ces dernières années quelques historiens ont cependant tenté de renverser la vapeur en jetant un premier regard sur cette forme méconnue de la distribution. A partir de témoignages épars et souvent indirects, de séries statistiques parfois imprécises et d'un faisceau d'informations recueillies aux sources les plus diverses, ils ont retracé l'univers social de ce marchand et mis en lumière son rôle capital dans la diffusion des produits et des idées, particulièrement dans les campagnes européennes et auprès des habitants de la frontière dans le Nouveau Monde.

L'ouvrage de Laurence Fontaine s'inscrit dans cette nouvelle mouvance. L'auteure a eu le privilège de bénéficier de l'importante documentation réunie en 1975 par Jean-Pierre Laurent, Directeur du Musée dauphinois, dans le cadre d'une exposition consacrée aux colporteurs-fleuristes de l'Oisans. En outre, poursuivant ses investigations, elle a mis la main sur un document quasiment unique en son genre et d'une prodigieuse richesse : la copie-lettre de Victor Nicolet pour la période 1828-1842. Ce gantier grenoblois fut l'un des principaux bailleurs de fonds des colporteurs uissants et son registre jette un éclairage inédit et signifiant sur les mécanismes de financement qui sous-tendent leurs campagnes.

A partir de cette source, des archives départementales de l'Isère et de nombreux témoignages oraux et écrits, Laurence Fontaine reconstruit le milieu géographique et socio-économique des colporteurs de l'Oisans. Elle décrit une région montagneuse et peu hospitalière où la nature mal maîtrisée engendrait une forte propension au départ; le phénomène n'est d'ailleurs pas propre à l'Oisans comme l'on bien montré les travaux de Jean-Jacques Darmon et de Claire Krafft-Pourrat. L'auteure rétablit ensuite la chronologie du colportage uissant pour montrer que, contrairement aux conclusions de C.Robert-Muller et A. Allix dans un ouvrage publié en 1925 et s'appuyant sur des enquêtes orales, l'apogée de ce commerce se situe non pas en 1880-90 mais dans la première moitié du XIX[ème] siècle. Cette thèse remet l'Oisans en harmonie avec les autre régions d'émigration marchande où le déclin du colportage à la fin du siècle passé, a été souligné par plusieurs auteurs. L'étude des personnages et des transactions qui apparaissent dans la copie-lettre de Nicolet, permet d'approcher les pratiques commerciales de ce négociant qui s'entoure de multiples garanties avant de financer une campagne de colportage. Dans les villages uissants, un réseau d'informateurs le tient ainsi au courant de l'évolution de la situation économique et familiale de chacun et lorsque ses débiteurs sont en voyage,