

### Book Reviews

in England, and his book will become a classic of its kind. Moreover, he indicates that material for similar studies is available, and it is to be hoped that others will continue this area of research. Meantime, both general and medical historians, as well as social and economic historians, and historical demographers, will wish to examine Dr. Gottfried's work closely.

CHARLES DE MERTENS, *An account of the plague which raged at Moscow 1771*, [facsimile of 1799 ed., with introduction by John Alexander], Newtonville, Mass., Oriental Research Partners, 1977, 8vo, pp. 39, v, 127, [no price stated].

Plague disappeared from the British Isles in the seventeenth century, but its appearance as close as Marseilles in 1720, and its constant presence in Asia throughout the eighteenth century, guaranteed British interest in the disease. The present volume is a facsimile reprint of a vivid, first-hand description of a devastating epidemic which occurred in Moscow in 1771. The author, a Belgian physician named Charles de Mertens (1737–1788), originally published his account in Latin in 1778, but translations into several European languages during the succeeding twenty years attest to the continued topicality of plague in Western Europe. The English version was first published in 1799. Mertens' English translator abridged the work somewhat, though retaining Mertens' account of the civic and medical measures taken to combat the Russian epidemic, and many of Mertens' shrewd observations on the treatment and prevention of plague. Mertens placed great stock in cleanliness, particularly in frequent sponging with vinegar and water. He was convinced that plague hospitals were the most effective way to contain the spread of the disease, and he decried the practice of quarantining both sick and well members of a family together.

In addition to Mertens' text, this edition contains an excellent, fully-documented introduction by Professor John Alexander of the University of Kansas. Alexander describes the original British response to the Russian plague epidemic of 1770–72 and places Mertens' little book in its historical setting.

COLIN McEVEDY and RICHARD JONES, *Atlas of world population history*, Harmondsworth, Middx., Penguin Books, 1978, 8vo, pp. 368, illus., £1.75 (paperback).

The authors aim to provide figures for the population of each country at regular intervals through historical time. There are six parts: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas, Oceania, and a global overview. Each of the first five sections has a general review, and then its countries are taken in turn, with a general account of demographic progress illustrated with graphs and maps, a discussion of primary sources for population data, and a bibliography.

As can be imagined, this is a remarkably useful and accurate work of reference, and it will continue to be so for some time. It is also cheap, and will deservedly find a wide audience of students and scholars.

G. MELVYN HOWE (editor), *A world geography of human diseases*, London and New York, Academic Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. xxviii, 621, illus., £24.00.

Although this book is dealing primarily with the modern position concerning the

## Book Reviews

global incidence of diseases and the geographical and social environmental factors influencing each of them, there is a small amount of historical data in some of the sections. Tropical and infectious diseases, industrial lung disease, drug abuse, cardiovascular disease, mental disorders and mental subnormality, malignant and deficiency diseases are discussed in twenty chapters, but there are no sections on neurological or rheumatic disorders. Thus, although intended for those concerned with present-day medical problems, it will be of value to the historian who wishes to read an authoritative review of the geography of a specific disease. For this it can be strongly recommended.

DAVID GRYLLES, *Guardians and angels. Parents and children in nineteenth-century literature*, London, Faber & Faber, 1978, 8vo, pp. 211, £6.50.

The author explores the relations between parent and child in the nineteenth century and their origins, by examining the literature of the period. He shows that everyday thought about children consisted eventually of a "Romantic" perspective, detectable in adult and children's books. By "Romantic" he means the attitude that romanticized the child as incapable of doing evil. Gradually the child was able to emancipate itself with the decline in parental control, despite the traditional view of the dictatorial Victorian father still held today.

Dr. Grylls deals mainly with Jane Austen, Dickens, Butler, and Gosse, and no doubt critics will contest this selection and the other authors he draws upon, or does not. He cites extensively, but unfortunately does not document his quotations. Nevertheless, his book can be recommended as another useful contribution to Victorian life, against which the history of medicine must be cast.

BRYAN GANDEVIA, *Tears often shed: child health and welfare in Australia from 1788*, Rushcutters Bay, Australia, and Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1978, 8vo, pp. 151, illus., [no price stated].

Dr Bryan Gandevia's contributions to the history of Australian medicine will be known to readers of this journal, since his articles have sometimes appeared in *Medical History*. Many of his publications, however, have come out in various Australian medical journals not routinely read by medical historians, so this present monograph will be particularly welcome. Most of Gandevia's historical work has been concerned with health and disease in their broadest manifestations, and the same generous approach characterizes this history of child health and welfare in Australia from the landing of the First Fleet in Botany Bay, January 1788, until the very recent past. Although Australia was primarily a convict colony until the middle of the nineteenth century, from the very beginning there were both convict children and the offspring of deported adults. During this period Australia acquired a reputation as a healthy place for children. Statistics are not completely reliable, but some figures for settlements in the western part of the colony suggest that, between 1842 and 1848, infant mortality ranged between four and ten per cent, roughly one-third the comparable rate in England. Gandevia analyses this phenomenon and points out that the major factor was the virtual absence of epidemic viral diseases such as measles and influenza. These viruses were generally unable to survive the long voyages from England, or if they did, were unable to remain endemic in the sparsely-populated