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there are already good studies of particular crises like that of 1557–1559,⁴¹ of particular regions like the West Riding,⁴³ the Vale of Trent,⁴⁵ the Lake District⁴⁶ and the area around Bromsgrove⁴⁷ which can all be used as a basis for further work.

These studies incidentally all serve to show that Creighton's descriptions based on mainly literary evidence are not very useful for plotting the course or estimating the impact of epidemics of the past; and it is something of a paradox that many medical writers seem to prefer to rely on his sort of literary record as a basis for 'historical arm-chair diagnosis', whereas social historians, realizing the limitations of documentary evidence on such matters, seem more ready to seek analogies from modern scientific medicine. It is surely safer to look first to modern work on rural diets⁴⁸ and pellagra⁴⁹ in remote parts of Yugoslavia and U.S.A., or on the conservation of plague in a foyer such as Iran,⁵⁰ rather than to Creighton's selective descriptions of the larders of manorial lords and medieval burial practices. A combination of such medical *facts* with demographic studies will soon show what is of value in traditional sorts of evidence, and that will then facilitate rather than impede a better understanding of the role played by disease in our social history.

⁴¹ J. D. Chambers, 'The Vale of Trent, 1670–1800', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, Supplement No. 3., 1957.

⁴³ W. G. Howson, 'Plague, poverty and population in parts of North-West England, 1580–1720', *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Cheshire*, 1961, 122, 29–57.

⁴⁷ D. E. C. Eversley, 'A survey of population in an area of Worcestershire from 1660–1850 . . .', *Pop. Stud.*, 1956–1957, 10, 253–79.

⁴⁸ See, for example, E. J. McDougall, 'Rural dietaries in Europe', *Bull. Hlth Org.* L.o.N., 1939, 8, 470–97.

⁴⁹ F. Sargent and V. W. Sargent, 'Season, nutrition and pellagra', *New Engl. J. Med.*, 1950, 242, 447–53, 507–14.

⁵⁰ See notably the work of M. Baltazard, summarized by the author, in 'La peste: état actuel de la question', *Acta med. iran.*, 1961, 4, 1–19, and 'La conservation de la peste en foyer invétéré', *Médecine et Hygiène*, 1964, 22, 172–74. The present author hopes soon to publish a study of the history of plague along these lines.

The Royal Apothecaries, by LESLIE G. MATTHEWS, London, Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1967, pp. xiv, 191, illus., 25s.

This scholarly book provides the first complete account of the pharmaceutical and medical practitioners who, under the names of spicer or apothecary, have provided an essential service for the kings and queens of England from the early thirteenth century to the present time. The duties have changed considerably during the centuries and the later royal apothecaries would probably have raised their eyebrows if asked to provide coloured wax for the royal seals, spiced wines for court festivals, perfumes to 'ayer the grete chamber', urinals for the use of Privy Councillors, or to embalm their late masters. The above list by no means exhausts the variety of non-medical duties undertaken. One of the author's few omissions seems to be the fact that William de Stanes, apothecary to Edward III, supplied materials for some of the earliest gunpowder used in warfare and himself served in the French Wars.

The short but valuable introduction shows that royal apothecaries were not confined to England but were also found on the Continent. Separate appointments for

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the king, the queen, and the royal children were often made; and some of the larger baronial establishments imitated the appointments made at court. The major part of the book treats of individual royal apothecaries in chronological order and at the end of every chapter are valuable references and copious notes.

The author has marshalled his many facts in an interesting way and the book is easy to read. It appears almost completely free from typographical errors and has a good index. Like other Wellcome publications the book is attractively produced at a very reasonable price. It can be recommended to all medical and pharmaceutical historians.

G. E. TREASE

Sword of Pestilence. The New Orleans Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853, by JOHN DUFFY, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1966, pp. xiv, 191, illus., \$5.00.

During the last years of the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century many American cities, including Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, Baltimore, Galveston and New Orleans, were affected by severe epidemics of yellow fever. A considerable number of their contemporary medical accounts have survived, filling several chapters in the history of epidemic diseases and public health. Duffy has been able to recreate the events of that New Orleans summer of 1853, during which more than eleven thousand people died of yellow fever, by resorting to the exclusive use of contemporary sources. The reader, indeed, is offered not only the medical reports, but can also follow newspaper accounts of night entertainment, the quarrels of the city council on sanitation and the arguments between opposite medical opinions while the city discovered with horror the existence of the epidemic. The use of the quoted material faithfully reproduces the environment and the events, but at the same time makes the reader a prisoner of the slow pace of the crisis and the anguish of a city decimated by disease while a powerless medical profession compensated in charitable devotion what it lacked in scientific knowledge. It would not be entirely correct to assume from this book that yellow fever first appeared in New Orleans in 1793 or that the 1853 New Orleans epidemic was unique in mortality figures. The use of non-contemporary sources would have enlarged the perspective with references to the now classic work by Carter (1931) or Smith's Galveston epidemic of 1839 published by Leake (1951).

F. GUERRA

Theorie von der Generation in zwei Abhandlungen erklärt und bewiesen Theoria Generationis, by C. F. WOLFF, reprint with an introduction by R. Herrlinger, Hildesheim, G. Olms, 1966, pp. 148, illus., DM.66,80.

This reprint of Caspar Friedrich Wolff's Latin dissertation of 1759, second edition of 1774, and German work on the same subject is still eminently readable because of its witty and acute observations on scientific method. As Professor Herrlinger's excellent introduction remarks, Wolff gives in its pages a history of embryology seen through eighteenth-century eyes. The main subject is the controversy between representatives of evolution and those of epigenesis as an explanation of generation in