

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