

Book Reviews

The Cholera Years. The United States in 1812, 1849 and 1866, by CHARLES E. ROSENBERG, Chicago, Ill., University of Chicago Press, 1962, pp. 257, \$7.50.

Diseases spread through the intestinal tract were considered the major health problems of nineteenth-century Europe and America. Of these, cholera was the disease that was most clearly defined and that created the greatest impact. On four occasions during the century, Europe and America were scourged by severe invasions of Asiatic cholera in the course of world pandemics. The United States was invaded in 1832-4, 1848-9, 1866 and 1873.

This monograph provides an interesting account of the first three epidemics. Based on journals, letters, newspapers, medical publications, as well as a wide variety of secondary sources, Rosenberg explores the reactions of American Communities, particularly New York City, to these recurring attacks. One of the major points made by the author is that a shift in attitudes occurred between 1832 and 1866. When cholera first appeared in the United States there was a tendency to attribute the outbreak to the wrath of God; thirty years later a more secularized attitude prevailed. Public health action was accepted by clergy and laity alike, and the Metropolitan Board of Health of New York, which came into existence in 1866, went to work with a will to combat the dreaded disease.

The study might have had even greater value had the author undertaken some comparison with countries like France and England. A study such as that of Louis Chevalier: *Le Cholera. La Première épidémie du XIX^e siècle*, 1958, offers interesting parallels and differences. Invocation of the deity and attribution of the greater incidence of the disease among the lower classes was not entirely characteristic of the United States.

The author has an eye for vivid detail, and he tells the story well. This book should find readers among physicians, medical students and public health practitioners.

GEORGE ROSEN

Din Istoria Medicinii Roministi si Universale, edited by V. L. BOLOGA, Bucharest, Editura Academiei Republica Populare Romine, 1962, pp. 517, no price given.

This collection of more than forty papers on various aspects of medical history, mostly purely Rumanian topics, ranges from a Bronze Age trepanning to the medical and sanitary problems of mass organizations of the Rumanian Communist Party. All the earlier papers are essential reading to anyone interested in the medical history of Eastern Europe, especially as they raise questions of comparison with Western Europe. For example, can the barber-surgeon who died at Cluj in 1589 be taken as typical of sixteenth-century Europe as a whole? His inventory, which is printed in full, shows several herbals and so many different drugs that it is difficult not to regard him as an early type of general-practitioner. In the essay on the spread of Harvey's discovery it is interesting to see that it was at Padua in the 1660s that Constantin Cantacuzino met the modern ideas of medicine; by this date Padua had lost its primacy for students of medicine in Western Europe, and it is a further mark of the difference between East and West that in Rumania monastic libraries were still of importance in the eighteenth century in the propagation of medical ideas. There are other interesting articles of general interest on Chekov, Lister and Descartes, and in the later essays there is a noticeable emphasis on preventive medicine and sanitation.

R. S. ROBERTS