

Book Reviews

in June, before the epizootic was carried up into the Inn valley where its progress from July onwards was finally reported by Lode and Gruber in November of the same year.

It is equally surprising, not to say saddening, to encounter Flexner and Lewis as “discoverers” of the virus of poliomyelitis, with no mention anywhere in the book of the pioneering transmission experiments made by Landsteiner and Popper in 1908, or of the filter experiments by Landsteiner and Levaditi published in November of 1909 which did in fact precede the observations made by Flexner and Lewis, if only by a mere three weeks.

Even if Landsteiner was amply rewarded in due course for his outstanding work in immunology, it seems rather ungrateful to disregard his early contributions to virology. And although Flexner is remembered with affection and respect for his work and influence as the first director of the Rockefeller Institute, this influence was not used to best advantage where poliomyelitis research was concerned, as J. R. Paul has pointed out in *A history of poliomyelitis* (1971).

The volume is nicely produced, although the few illustrations do not quite match the general standard. All in all, a book to be welcomed.

MICHAEL W. DOLS, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. xvii, 390, illus., £14.90.

A great deal has been written on the Black Death in Europe, especially its onslaughts on the western parts of it, but until now there has been no comprehensive study in English of the pandemic in the Middle East. The author, an Assistant Professor of History at California State University, who carried out much of his excavations in Cairo, has tackled, with scholarly thoroughness and immaculate documentation, the medical, social, economic, demographic, and religious aspects of this topic; so that his book is, and will remain for some time, the authoritative work on the subject.

It is based mainly on Arabic sources, many of which have not been made known to the West before; all Arabic, however, has been transliterated. The section on medical details reveals occasional deficiencies, but the author has obviously taken special advice in this area. There is an extensive bibliography of plague in the Middle East.

The book's main purpose is to recount and account for events and results of the Black Death, which were also seen in the West, but mainly the dramatic destruction by it of the Middle Eastern population, and the effects of subsequent epidemics. Again as in European countries, the social and economic repercussions, as seen in Egypt and Syria, were of special significance. The author is also concerned with the means of the disease's transmission, with the chronology of its advance through the Middle East on its way to Europe, and with subsequent outbreaks, which also had widespread demographic, social, and economic consequences. It is of special interest to compare and contrast the social implications with similar events in the West, and to note the relative religious influences.

This is an excellent book that opens up a new chapter in the history of plague, little of which has been previously known in the West. Despite its seemingly narrow interest, it will be of importance to medical historians, students of Islam, medievalists, and to those concerned with the history of diseases, especially tropical.