

Book Reviews

Unfortunately, despite the laudatory aims of the editors this work suffers from many defects: the in-born errors of the anthology, arising probably from the mistaken idea that to collect and reprint selections is the easiest way of compiling a book. The authors chosen are almost exclusively American, as though similar problems and studies have not occurred in other countries. No doubt it is easier to present material written in English, rather than having to translate it or have it translated from a foreign tongue. Or has there been more mental retardation in the United States than elsewhere, thus inciting a larger and better literature? The introduction to the sections and the papers are quite inadequate, and there is little or nothing about the authors. The literature referred to is insufficient, and the final indignity is that the authors have had sufficient historical objectivity to consider one of their own papers worthy of inclusion!

CARLO M. CIPOLLA, *Public health and the medical profession in the Renaissance*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. viii, 136, illus., £5.50.

In his outstanding book, *Cristofono and the plague* (1973), Professor Cipolla has already demonstrated brilliantly how to employ medico-historical manuscript sources to the best advantage. Now he immerses himself again in the extraordinarily wealthy Italian archives, and the result is a second book of impeccable scholarship, which is likewise well written and replete with documentation.

It is composed of two parts: 'The origin and development of the Health Boards' (the author's Ellen McArthur Lectures, 1975); and, 'The medical profession in Galileo's Tuscany'. In the first the author shows how, to begin with, the health authorities were concerned only with plague, the disease that dominates the Renaissance, here considered to be from approximately the beginning of the thirteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century. Italy was far ahead of other European countries in the field of public health, and gradually the Boards began to control general standards of hygiene, registration of deaths, prostitution, movement of foreign merchandise and the selling of food. Professor Cipolla, who is a historian of economics, discusses these public health measures as related to the social and economic factors of the time. The concept and practice of public health, however, was basically a creation due to the perils of plague and when this disease subsided in Italy at the end of the eighteenth century, so did the controls, and the next advances took place in Britain and France.

In the second part of his book, Professor Cipolla analyses a census of the medical profession taken in Tuscany in 1630. The results are of the greatest importance, because they produce a new picture which refutes or modifies previously accepted opinions. With this document it is possible to quantify the doctor's role in society and the creation of community doctors.

Professor Cipolla has produced another praiseworthy and significant contribution to the history of medicine and others should be inspired to emulate him. With his liberal use of manuscripts he is laying sure foundations for further research and this is exactly what should also be done in Britain, even though the material may not be as rich as in Italy. Too much history is copied from secondary sources and too few writers go to the fountain-head.