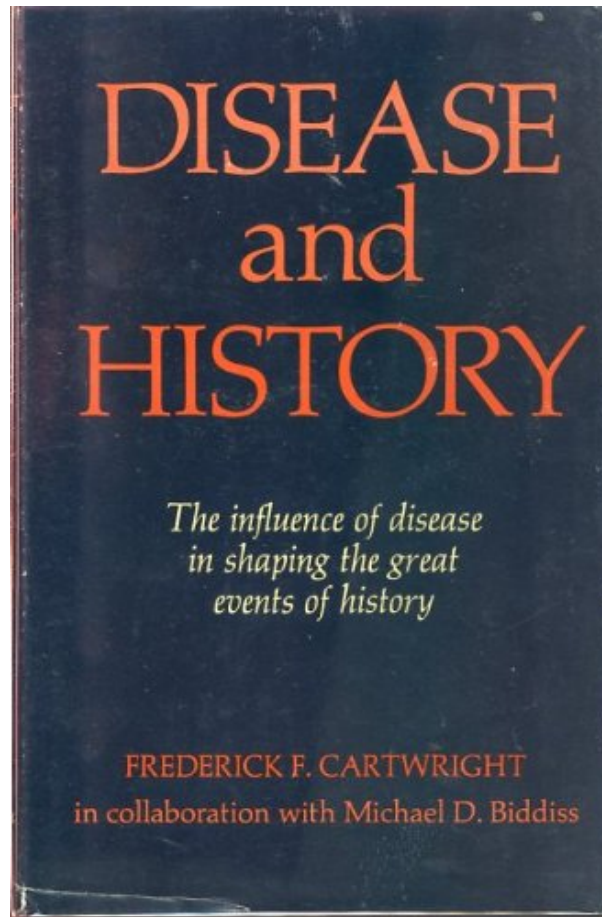
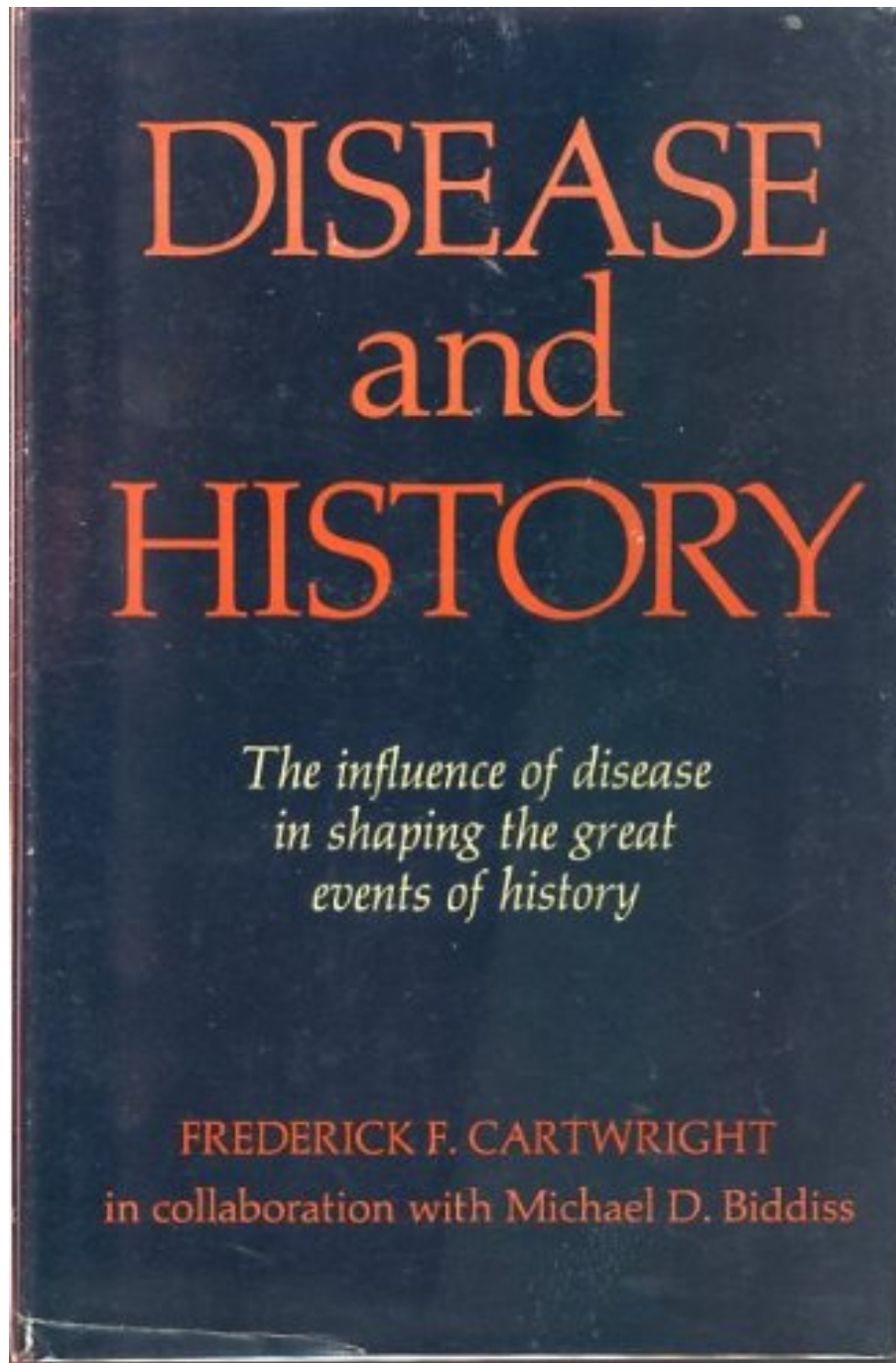


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About the Author

The late Frederick Cartwright headed the Department of the History of Medicine at King's College Medical School, London.

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This volume traces the influence of disease on the civilizations, armies, and leaders that dominate history. They demonstrate that even the most powerful individuals and societies can be, and have been, fatally weakened by disease.

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an extraordinary tale of bugs and battles

By mary

This is a fascinating account of the impact that disease has had on the history of the human race, strongly recommended for anyone who has ever wondered about the interplay between pestilence, famine and war. The authors, an historian and a doctor, use their joint skills to show how Man's ambitions have long been thwarted by outbreaks of deadly illnesses, bacterial, viral, genetic and others. The book shows, for example, how Napoleon's invasion of Russia failed after his armies were decimated by typhus, how cholera and scurvy contributed to the disasters of the Crimean War, and the role of Queen Victoria's haemophilic gene behind the Russian Revolution. It is an extraordinary tale.

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interesting, but a chore to read

By D. K. Stokes

Ah, the power of preventive medicine. Somewhere in this book, and I wish I'd put a sticky note in so I could post the exact quote, it states that in wartime, disease is more deadly to soldiers than battle. Which was the entire reason for my specialty when I was in the army (preventive medicine specialist). Which, in turn, is why I bought this book years and years ago. I'd just never actually sat down and read the whole thing until now.

Disease and History is a little more wide-ranging than just the history of disease in a military setting--it shows how disease has changed the course of history, from epidemics that killed thousands to how disease affecting an individual ruler or ruling family caused changes in how, or sometimes whether, they ruled.

However, it's a real chore to slog through reading.

The first couple of chapters are the most interesting, the ones about the Black Death and other epidemics, and I found the chapter on Napoleon just fascinating.

But the writing itself is painful to read--it's written like a freshman research paper. Lots of telling the reader what you're going to tell them. Then there are the tangents. A section will be about a particular disease, but it'll meander off into a long-winded discussion of something else and never end up tying the two together, or making a conclusion about it.

That's particularly evident in the later chapters--a discussion of hemophilia and the fall of the Russian monarchy gets completely derailed, and the chapter on mass suggestion is just a mess of unrelated stuff that if I were cynical, I'd suspect was added to cash in on the Princess Di fever.

The final chapter, about modern life, is a bit dated--understandably so, since the book was first written in 1972, so it's a historical look at the subject in itself. It's a combination of interesting facts and the author's political and generational biases.

Even though Disease and History has a lot of flaws, I very much enjoyed parts of it, and found the subject matter intriguing enough to plan on seeking out other books on the subject.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

colonisations of other countries and other aspects of history was easy to understand and informative

By Mayfield

An interesting book explaining disease and epidemics over the ages. How they affected wars, colonisations of other countries and other aspects of history was easy to understand and informative. A little dry in places but a book to dip in and out of for information.

K Mayfield

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