BOOK REVIEWS

Principles of Epidemiology. By Ian Taylor and John Knowelden. (Pp. vii + 300; 26 figures. 30s.) London: J. & A. Churchill. 1957.

For a long time our ability to control infection has depended upon how well we understand the complex patterns made by disease in the community. The controlled observation of these patterns has come to be known as "epidemiology" and the techniques used as "epidemiological". In the past, therefore, knowledge of epidemiology has been of importance mainly to those concerned with community health and particularly with the control of infectious disease. Not very surprisingly, epidemiological techniques have helped us to understand other non-infectious diseases where the principal clues to aetiology have come from their geographical, social, or occupational distribution. This understanding has been of benefit particularly to industry but there can hardly be any part of medicine where epidemiology in its new and inevitably broadened sense is not in current use. For this reason the techniques used by epidemiologists are now of interest and importance to us all; they are among the essential tools of all scientific medicine.

Because epidemiology is almost the only part of medicine without an elementary text-book we have looked forward for some time with special interest to the two or three books on the subject which have been promised. If this book, which is the first to appear, is any measure of later quality we are to be fortunate indeed, for Drs. Taylor and Knowelden have given us a most useful and interesting introduction to the subject.

The increasing breadth of epidemiology has set the authors a problem of presentation. They have compromised by giving the first and last parts of the book largely to general principles and the centre piece, the main part of the book, exclusively to the infections.

A consideration of the ways of measuring disease, the sources of information, and the problems associated with collecting mortality and morbidity statistics leads on to the use of rates, to the characteristics of populations, and to the census. There is a clear and interesting discussion of the use of special survey techniques with examples in the fields of general practice and industry and a note on prospective studies of the type used recently in the investigation of lung cancer. Finally in the introductory chapters, there is a discussion of the structure of the controlled study and of the difficulties in selection of the control group.

From this exciting beginning (which is surely much too short) we are taken on a brief course of bacteriology and virology as an introduction to the characteristics of the classical air-, food-, water-, and milk-borne infections. A section on immunity leads to a description of current immunological techniques. Finally, slipping away again

from orthodoxy the authors return to an all too brief consideration of the measurement of "host" factors in epidemiology ranging from age and sex through the family, the place of living, housing, neighbours, occupation and social class. References are always given in footnotes, which is convenient as one reads the text, but is a minor frustration when a group of references is needed.

Here is a book which is both satisfying and a little disappointing, satisfying in that it fills an important gap among our textbooks and is clear, concise, and well produced; disappointing only in that it whets the appetite for more, for the principles of epidemiology applied to the new threats to the public health, to duodenal ulcer and coronary disease, accidents, and damaged genes. Let us hope there will soon be a Part II to this excellent book.

E. M. BACKETT

Le Précis de Médecine du Travail, 2nd ed. Edited by Professeur C. Simonin and others. (Pp. xii + 1,406; 326 figures. Fr. frs. 6,800.) Paris: Librairie Maloine. 1956.

This is the second edition of a systematic text book, first published in 1950, on occupational medicine, edited by Professor C. Simonin, director of the Institute of Legal and Social Medicine at Strasbourg. Professor Simonin himself contributes many chapters, and his 27 co-authors come mainly from the Strasbourg school. The first edition was awarded the Prix Fournier of the Académie Nationale de Médecine and it is clearly worthy of the distinction. The new edition contains 32 new chapters, which deal, amongst other subjects, with the psychology and physiology of work, toxicology, systematic and special pathology of occupation, and the duties and remuneration of works doctors. The book has over 300 illustrations, of which nearly 200 are new; the type is clear, but the text is printed in two sizes, which does not make for easy reading. This suggests the necessity for a new paragraph on occupational eye-strain in the readers of text-books on occupational diseases!

France has been a backward country as far as industrial health services are concerned, but in 1946 a compulsory national industrial health service sprang Minerva-like fully armed straight from Jupiter's head. The doctors engaged in the health service have to do a year's course in occupational health and pass an examination for the Diplôme de Médecine du Travail. This book covers the syllabus for the examination, and it is indeed formidable. Our own candidates for the D.I.H. have to know a great deal less. It is interesting to note that both works