THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL MEDICINE

Introductory

Only a very strong case would justify the launching in time of war of a new quarterly journal. Such a case, we believe, has been made out for the British Journal of Industrial Medicine, of which this is the first number. Indeed, had it not been established to the satisfaction of those responsible for its actual publication and for allotting the required paper, this journal could obviously not now have appeared, although it has long been envisaged by many medical men and women engaged in industrial medicine. Before the war, Medicine had of course touched industry at various points. The particular hazards involved in certain types of process and manufacture had called for special research and the adoption of precautionary measures, in many cases enforced by legislation; and these had formed the study and administrative concern of a group of doctors, both inside and outside various Government Departments. The examination of entrants to industry, particularly juveniles, had been a main task of certifying factory surgeons. The Post Office, as the largest single industrial concern in the country, had provided free medical attention, since the middle of the last century, for all its employees below a certain salary, and had been keeping accurate sick records of its whole staff for very many years past. More recently, certain large industrial concerns had begun to employ whole-time medical advisers to deal with such questions as working conditions, toxic hazards, the treatment of accidents, rehabilitation and general sick absence problems.

It was this movement that brought into being in 1935 the Association of Industrial Medical Officers, whereby doctors thus employed in a whole-time capacity in various branches of industry could meet for a pooling of experiences, mutual help and advice and for the furtherance of research. Sir Wilson Jameson, then dean of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, was consulted and gave the young movement much valuable practical assistance; and within two years the Association had come to include eight honorary and forty-six ordinary members. In 1937 it was invited to give evidence before the Interdepartmental Committee on rehabilitation of persons injured by accident; in 1938 it was officially invited by the Home Office to discuss the problem of Air-Raid precautions in factories; and in 1939 it was asked to give evidence before the Royal Commission then considering Workmen's Compensation.

Since the outbreak of war there has, of course, been an enormous development of industrial problems with a medical aspect. Great new industries have come into being. Scores of thousands of men and women and girls and boys have been introduced—many of them for the first time—into factory life in necessarily strenuous and unaccustomed conditions. New toxic and other hazards have arisen in the wake of invention and the extension of war work to factories hitherto otherwise employed; and a very large number of new factories have come into production in all parts of the country.

All this has brought into contact with industrial life an increasing number both of whole-time and part-time doctors. The Association of Industrial Medical Officers now in itself has more than three hundred members; and in addition, large numbers of nurses and welfare officers are—many of them for the first time—being confronted with daily problems in which Medicine is directly or indirectly concerned. It was therefore felt that the time had come when such a journal as this might be of great value to a considerable and influential body of workers not only in factories but in mines, shipping, docks, the transport services and in clerical and commercial organization; and thanks to the very great help of the British Medical Association, under whose aegis it is appearing, the initial obstacles were met and overcome.

Briefly, the British Journal of Industrial Medicine is intended to include, within one pair of covers, not only original articles and notes with a definite industrial bearing but abstracts from those many other journals—published both here and abroad—which may contain material of value to any doctor engaged in advising upon, or actually treating, industrial staffs. These doctors are usually more than fully occupied. Many of them are in relatively remote places, or at any rate not in a position to attend libraries or lectures, or to read for themselves a multiplicity of medical journals. It is also believed that this journal may be of some interest—and it is hoped value—to many employers of industry, whether State or private. The standard that it has set for itself is to be objective and scientific, in the broadest sense of the latter term, and it has no political bias.

It will be realized that it is, at the moment, being produced in extremely difficult conditions. It cannot expect to attain perfection, or anything near this, at a bound; and the editors will be only too glad to receive criticism and constructive ideas. Series of authoritative articles are being arranged for which will deal with industrial environment, toxicology and the particular hazards met with in different industries; and original contributions will always have the warmest welcome and most careful consideration. Although our title is the British Journal of Industrial Medicine, it is hoped in time to associate with it representatives of industrial medicine in the Dominions and United States of America.