BOOK REVIEWS

Toxicity of Industrial Organic Solvents. By Ethel Browning. I.H.R.B. Report No. 80, revised edition. (Pp. 411. 35s.) London: H.M.S.O. 1952.

This edition, like its predecessor published in 1937, is a series of valuable monographs. Dr. Ethel Browning has collected literature on the toxicity to men and animals of 126 solvents and has succeeded in making the narrative very readable. Additions include monographs on substances such as silicones and picoline which have only recently come into common use. The extent of the literature and the dullness of much of it makes her achievement on both scores most notable. The selection has been admirable: the trivial has been omitted but nothing of importance missed. Also, Dr. Browning has drawn on the files of the Home Office and Ministry of Labour for some of her information. The result is a concise and comprehensive narrative. Any monograph might be taken as a model: that on benzol is superb. The preface tells us 15.2 million gallons of it (excluding motor and aviation spirits) were distributed in 1951.

No serious criticism can be offered on the book. A minor improvement would be to place the references immediately after each substance rather than at the end of the chapter where of necessity they accumulate into a formidable list. Some expression of Dr. Browning's views on the literature she reports would be especially valuable.

The book should be of value to all physicians interested in industrial medicine, but if chemical engineers and managers and whoever deal with toxic solvents kept this book on their desk, many hazards might be avoided. A daily lectionary would do much to safeguard the health and life of men exposed to toxic solvents.

The Food and Drug Act 1938 requires that patent medicines must have the formula printed on the label. Admittedly, the formula is often designed to blind the ignorant, and the not-so-ignorant, but at least it is there and can, with patience, be deciphered. Those who have to deal with commercial solvents and paints know how difficult it is to find out what is actually in the product. If the formula is not regarded as secret, it is certainly surrounded in mystery and sometimes it seems that even the manufacturers do not know what they have put into a solvent. If a member of parliament, who had luck of the draw, introduced a Bill to enforce the declaration of the constituents of all solvents and paints, etc., he would do a lot to preserve health in industry. Even so, the study of Dr. Browning's work would still be essential.

T. A. LLOYD DAVIES

The National Health Service. A Guide for Practitioners. Edited by Max Sorsby. (Pp. 267. 12s. 6d.) Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone. 1953.

This is a valuable little book produced for the very modest price of 12s. 6d. It covers the whole range of medical services and all forms of insurance, benefits, compensation, and pensions administered by the State; it will serve a useful purpose in explaining the complicated, detailed and, at times, almost incomprehensible legal terminology of the various acts, orders, and regulations which form the structure of the scheme. It even goes further and makes a rather dry subject always readable and often interesting and it can be read as a book quite apart from its main function as a work of reference. It is sure to become a textbook for the student reading for the Diploma in Public Health and all interested in state medicine.

The book is, however, addressed to the general practitioner who is a particularly vulnerable victim of the great mass of legislation. He has never the time and rarely the interest to read the acts and their riders in the original, and a readable working guide, which is admirably complete, should be of the greatest service to him.

From the strictly medical aspect there is little of interest to the doctor in industry but the economic side is of importance to him, and furthermore most doctors in industry are also general practitioners.

The book is divided into six sections; the first is devoted to an historical explanation of the evolution of the Health Service, the second to the doctor-patient relationship showing the rights of each, and the third to the various statutory bodies administering the Service, with separate chapters on the Medical Practices Committee, the Executive Council, the Local Medical Committee, National Insurance, the Local Health Authority, and Hospital Boards. Each is written by an expert in his own field and there is no overlapping of subject matter.

Section 4 deals with the non-statutory bodies: the General Medical Services Committee, the B.M.A., and the Guild of Freedom in Medicine. Section 5 describes the special services, dental, eye, maternity, pharmaceutical, and hospital welfare, and includes an interesting chapter on the work of the coroner.

Section 6 is the only non-factual part of this work and has two chapters on "Some Remediable Deficiencies" and "Looking Forward". The first of these is written by the editor and few will disagree with Dr. Sorsby's proposals which are sensible and restrained, but the epidemiologist may boggle at the suggestion of nursing