BOOK REVIEWS


This number of the archives is devoted entirely to industrial medicine and contains articles by various contributors. The Institute is concerned primarily with occupational medicine in the four departments of this region. These have a population of 3½ million, of whom about 800,000 are engaged in industry. In recent years many doctors have taken the special course of study in industrial medicine in Lille, and the area contains a large number of doctors who are partly or wholly in industrial employment. It is served likewise by a technical and medical inspectorate of the government. The institute is equipped to carry out special research work.

In the course of a year about 20 per cent. of the labour force is involved in accidents at work and it would appear that though the accident service is well organized the professional skill of some of the surgeons, particularly those specializing in orthopedics or practising in this field without special knowledge, is subject to considerable criticism. One contributor thinks the time overdue for the status of a specialist to be more strictly defined and his professional attainments verified.

In the whole of France there is an active working population of about 12 million, and of these 600,000 are subject to accidents at work during the year and 2,000 people lose their lives in this manner. Accidents are increasing, though the reasons for this are obscure. It is apparently possible for owners of industrial undertakings to refuse entry to government inspectors desiring to verify working conditions.

There is great need of a comprehensive and easily understood handbook on safety and hygiene in industry. The present lack of such a handbook is particularly unfortunate as so many safety measures have to be understood and carried out by laymen.

Various industrial disorders are described in some detail. One contributor concludes that Dupuytren's contracture is not an occupational disorder but rather a diathesis, often hereditary. He differentiates from this the genuine occupational thickenings of the palmar aponeurosis, which are usually unilateral rather than bilateral. Another contributor describes a new method for the detection and estimation of arsioni-urated hydrogen. A method of estimating olfactory acuity is also described.

A large number of the industrial workers in this part of France are engaged in the coal mines. Various detailed descriptions of the local rocks and coal measures are included in this volume, and one contributor thinks that the dust of a weathered rock is notably less injurious to the treated in this way to patients. The entire rock which has not been exposed to weather. In his view, weathering occasions a metamorphosis of the rock structure.

Dust diseases are more frequent than before the war, but it is not clear whether this is an apparent increase due to better methods of detection. Aluminium powder as a preventive of silicosis is not advocated and is said to be contraindicated if tuberculosis is present.

Drs. Foubert and Nadiras have written an interesting article on a modified method of classifying individual aptitudes and occupational hazards. They have drawn on the experience of Eck, and under about twenty headings have devised a system somewhat reminiscent of Pulheems as now coming into use in the British Army. The results are seen in the form of a line drawn between various points on a table from above downwards. The items to be described are graduated from left to right in a series of horizontal lines one above the other. With practice it should be easy to read such a diagram very quickly and thus sum up both the man and the job.

Some attention is given to the legal position of a doctor employed in industry. By French law the employer cannot insure against inexcusable mistakes made by his employees, and among these are the doctor. Everyone guilty of such a mistake may be held directly responsible.

Although this volume is of considerable interest, regrets are expressed in the introduction that in many departments of industrial medicine France is still a long way behind other countries.

G. C. P.


The writer has in recent years investigated over three hundred cases of poisoning. Few of these were criminal, but there were seventy-eight cases of accidental poisoning, often by carbon monoxide, and twenty-nine cases of occupational intoxication.

In the chapter on gaseous poisons he gives a useful table of the relative toxicities of fumes from different types of motor vehicles and of various domestic heaters. In the third chapter he describes the effects of volatile poisons and notes that in cyanide poisoning the discovery of sulphur combined with cyanide is difficult of interpretation when autopsy is made some time after putrefaction has begun. In cases of alcoholic poisoning he also stresses the fact that death may occur when all traces of alcohol have disappeared.

In the post-mortem investigation of suspected cases of arsenic poisoning, error is sometimes possible unless the expert remembers that vestiments and other articles enclosed in the coffin may yield some arsenic to the visceral remains. If intravenous arsenicals have been given they leave little trace, whereas subcutaneous arsenicals leave considerably more. If the viscera contain from 3 to 7 mg., arsenical treatment may still
be the cause, but if centigrammes are found then a more serious view should be taken.
Most of the common poisons are discussed, and the book is set out attractively. Having dealt with the inorganic compounds, the alkaloids, hypnotics, and other dangerous drugs, the author pays considerable attention to the use of physiological experiment to supplement other evidence. A useful description is also given of the whole course of an autopsy in a case of suspected poisoning. The case was imaginary, but is an excellent description of fatal cerebral haemorrhage after a bout of alcoholism.

G. C. P.


This book is an account of the proceedings of a Conference held in London in April, 1947. There were four sessions; broadly, the first was concerned with pathology, the second with therapy, the third with dust suppression, and the fourth with dust sampling methods; in fact in the first two the doctors were talking, and in the second two it was the turn of chemists and physicists. None of the papers contained new or original work, but the book is a valuable compilation in which good work published elsewhere is made readily available.

The outstanding paper of the first session was by Gough, in which he described his now well known views on simple pneumoconiosis with focal emphysema as the chief pathological change, and infected pneumoconiosis with progressive massive fibrosis in which he thinks tubercle is always present. In the second session the account of pneumoconiosis on the Kolar Gold Field in India, by Caplan, was the most important contribution, perhaps the most important contribution of the whole book, since a good description of the disease in India is not available elsewhere. It is far from clear why the lung changes in men working in this mining area, where drilling has to be done dry because of the heat and great humidity of the mines, should be so comparatively slight. Caplan suggests that it may be due to the large amount of silicates present in the dust. The valuable work of Craw has already been published in this journal. (Brit. J. indus. Med., 1947, 4, 30.) On the morning of the second day, the third session was devoted to papers on dust suppression methods on the Witwatersrand and in British coal mines, the principal methods used being good ventilation of the mines, the use of wet cutting methods, foam, and sprays for dust-allaying purposes. The last session was a highly technical one, in which the merits of the komineter, the thermal precipitater, and other instruments used for dust sampling were discussed.

This is a useful publication which should be read by all who are interested in the subject of pneumoconiosis.

K. M. A. P.


"The rheumatic diseases" is a vague term but one which has come into general use to cover a group of diseases affecting joints and muscles; and certainly a good textbook dealing with these diseases was badly needed. This book fulfills that wish admirably. A book which has been written by twenty-four contributors is bound to have different styles and standards in it; but there is no doubt that somo of the chapters in this book are of exceptionally high standard. The chapter on gout by Henry Cohen is an outstanding contribution. It is a model of how a chapter for a book of this type should be written, and it is complete with a full bibliography. Bibliography is important in a book which is designed, at least to some extent, to cater for the needs of postgraduates: and it is therefore a pity that in some chapters it is short and shows a tendency to refer to earlier textbooks rather than to original work.

The chapter on social and industrial aspects of rheumatism is ably written by William Tegner. He forcefully points out that there is no known etiological relationship between occupation and this group of diseases, apart from the stress and strains of certain work which may accelerate the normal degenerative changes which Bauer has shown start in all human joints as early as the age of 21, and which finally give rise to osteo-arthritis.

K. M. A. P.


The second part of this book includes the description of the neck, breast, thorax, upper extremity, and hernia, etc. All the sections are clearly illustrated in black and white and in colour; the hernia and the neck lesions lend themselves well to photography.

The text is clear and concise throughout, so this edition should be as popular with students and practitioners as its predecessors have been. Students of industrial disease will look especially at the sections devoted to the upper limb, and particularly to those pages which describe injuries and infections of the hand. This part of the book could with advantage be enlarged in future editions.

E. C. B. B.