BOOK REVIEWS


In his work as a surgeon on the staff of the Royal Eye Hospital in south London, Minton early became impressed with the large number of accidents and diseases affecting the eye which were associated with the patient's occupation, and with the need for further research into methods of prevention and treatment of these conditions. He gave an account of his own work in this field in his Hunterian Lecture to the Royal College of Surgeons in 1947, and the material for this lecture has now been expanded into a handbook which should prove to be most useful to industrial medical officers and others concerned with the safety and health of industrial workers. The author stresses the importance of visiting factories and other work places, and of discussing with workers and management the ways in which the eyes may be damaged, and what steps can be taken to reduce these hazards. He found that in many factories the eyes were injured more often than any other part of the body, and that in a large motor works, employing some 11,500 persons, there were nearly five thousand cases of eye injury in a single year, including 4,588 cases of foreign body in the eye.

The first-aid treatment of eye injuries is dealt with clearly, and a number of case-histories are quoted to illustrate the perils of neglect in seeking proper advice about apparently trivial accidents, especially such as may involve penetration of the eye by flying particles. The ocular manifestations of certain forms of industrial poisoning, and the risks to the eye of various forms of radiation, are described. The author gives some valuable advice on the visual requirements of various kinds of work, and discusses the rehabilitation of persons whose vision has been gravely impaired by accident or disease of the eyes.

Any new edition which the author may contemplate would give him an opportunity of revising a few passages and deleting rather than filling up his work with unnecessary detail and accuracy: for instance, he advises the use of ammonium chloride solution for immediate treatment of alkali burns, but the concentration is variously referred to, on p. 40 as \(\frac{1}{3}\) to 5 per cent., and on p. 43 as 4 to 10 per cent. It is surprising to read on p. 49 that keratitis may result from exposure to 8 parts per million of hydrogen sulphide — Henderson and Haggard (1943) found that concentrations of this gas below 20 parts per million had no physiological effects, and that these did not become serious until the percentage rose to much greater figures. Similarly, Minton fixes the maximum permissible concentration of carbon monoxide at one part in 10,000, whereas Henderson and Haggard (1926) regard six times this concentration as capable of producing "just perceptible effects in one hour". Is the risk of "Arc eye" really so formidable that the minimum safe working distance from an arc to anyone not using a protective screen is 200 ft.? This is stated (p. 85) to be a fact, even though it is admitted (p. 86) that at 50 ft. it takes an exposure of 17 minutes to cause an ocular reaction.

The author gives much sound advice on job analysis and the detection from the medical point of view of visual standards, on the proper use of lighting and colour in workrooms, and on protective devices to prevent eye injuries. The book is well produced and illustrated, and is a good example of the valuable results which may be expected when a specialist in an important branch of clinical medicine devotes his attention to the practical application of his knowledge and experience to the problems in the industrial field.

D. C. N.

Works Lavatories. Published by Industrial Welfare Society Inc. 1949. Pp. 82. Illustrated. 12s. 6d.

This is a handsome if somewhat expensive guide published by the Industrial Welfare Society in an effort to stimulate interest and improve conditions in cloakrooms, washrooms, and lavatories in industry. It is clearly printed on good quality paper and explains in simple language, with lavish use of diagrams, individual needs and how to accomplish them.

Lavatories are common to all workplaces but have often in the past merely conformed to legal requirements, and little attention has been paid to upkeep, cleanliness, or supervision. Supervision should be of the highest order, preferably under the aegis of a representative of higher management. This book should certainly be in his hands. It lays down the legal requirements for all industries, stresses the standard that should be aimed at and gives suggestions how to achieve it, either by fresh construction or by adaptation of existing equipment. The technical section is simple and sound, though it only claims to be a guide and not a manual of sanitary engineering. The chapter on classified information answers most of the questions and solves many of the problems of the supervisor without a technical background. A comprehensive bibliography provides a most useful guide of additional information.

C. G. S.


This book, now in its second edition, lucidly explains to the general public the National Insurance Scheme as laid down in the National Insurance Act (1946) which came into force on 5 July, 1948. The wide field covered by the act is illustrated by the fact that 10 million claims, involving 40 million separate payments were made in the first year. The impact that this has on industry can be gauged from the knowledge that there were 7½ million pensions and allowances, 7 million new claims to sickness benefit and 4 million retirement or old age pensions, in a country of an insured population of 20 million people.

Practically every person in the land has become state insured as a result of the act, and has been classified as (1) employed, (2) self-employed, or (3) non-employed. Contributions are divided between the insured person, the employer, and the state. The appropriate rates are clearly defined, together with possible exemptions from contribution. The benefits which are payable under the act are: (1) Unemployment and Sickness Benefit; (2) Maternity Benefit; (3) Widows' Benefit; (4) Guardian Allowance; (5) Retirement Pension; (6) Death Grant.

The whole machinery for settlement and payment of claims is dealt with at length, including the means of arbitration in cases of dispute. The book ends with an appendix in which the act is set out in annotated sections containing the relevant book references. This handbook should prove popular because of the wideness of its appeal and the clarity of its exposition.

C. G. S.