

400 periodicals and is divided into sections on medicine, including nursing; pure sciences, including chemistry; and applied sciences, including agriculture, building, engineering, metals, manufactures and industrial organisation. A separate section contains some 24 dictionaries, encyclopaedias and other reference books.

Additional material includes more than 20 photographs of British Nobel prizewinners in the sciences.

Cancer Registration in England and Wales.

THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL ANNOUNCED RECENTLY the publication* of the third in the series of "Studies on Medical and Population Subjects"; this is "Cancer Registration in England and Wales," described in an explanatory subtitle as an enquiry into treatment and its results.

It is estimated that in England and Wales about 100,000 people begin to suffer from one or other form of cancer in each year. Many attempts have been made to ascertain which method of treatment for certain kinds of cancer gives the best results, but usually they have failed to give reliable answers because the patients have been selected or incompletely followed up. What is needed is accurate records of treatment and its results for large numbers of individual patients.

This was recognised by the Radium Commission which made a useful beginning. Some provision for records was made under The Cancer Act of 1939, but it meant laborious collection and analysis of progress of people receiving treatment for each variety of cancer. Inevitably development was slowed up by the war. In 1945, following consultations between the General Register Office, the Ministry of Health and the Radium Commission, recording on a carefully designed plan commenced at many radiological centres and hospitals; and in that year about 28,000 patients were brought under observation for statistical purposes. By 1948 the new cases registered annually by the hospitals and recorded at the General Register Office amounted to about one half of the estimated annual total of new cases in the country. These cases were distributed among more than 250 hospitals. In many hospitals, however, the records are confined to patients treated by radiotherapy, and surgical cases are not yet adequately covered.

This report contains the first series of tables derived from the records, showing for cancer of each part of the body, according to the new International Classification of Diseases, the numbers of patients who first registered for treatment in 1945 and 1946 at each hospital centre by sex and age. Analysis of the 70,000 cases is made according to reported duration of symptoms, stage of the disease, kind of treatment and the outcome at the end of one year from date of registration. The mean ages of the patients registered varied greatly according to the organ affected; and the median interval between earliest symptoms and registration was appreciably shorter at some centres than at others. When there has been previous treatment the nature of it is analysed; and another table relates survival during the first year with the reputed duration of symptoms before treatment began.

The tables of greatest interest, perhaps, are those showing for patients in various conditions and treated in different ways the proportions at the end of one year who were alive, with and without apparent recovery, and of those who had died with and without evidence of cancer being present. A follow-up of only one year clearly cannot answer many questions which it is hoped to answer later when the records at the end of three, four, five and more years have been obtained and the main purpose of this first report is to explain the aims and methods of the work and lay the

foundation for the progress records which will follow in subsequent reports.

One of the difficulties confronting research workers in this field has been the diversity of methods used to calculate survival and recovery rates in the past, making it almost impossible to compare one series with another. Standard procedures were wanted which all would accept and practice, and the World Health Organisation in 1949 appointed a committee of experts to recommend such standards and advise on cancer records and statistics generally. The committee met in Paris in March, 1950, and its first report, after examination by the Expert Committee on Health Statistics, was adopted by the Third World Health Assembly in May and made available. The rules and methods recommended for measuring survival and apparent recovery are quoted and have been used by the General Register Office throughout the tables of this report. No time has been lost, therefore, in commencing in this country the large-scale study of cancer treatment which is needed. It is hoped that those Hospitals which are not yet participating fully will take steps to that end, so that the General Register Office may be able eventually to include surgical treatment as completely as radiological treatment in its reports, and to cover as nearly as possible all cancer patients in the country.

Similar systems of registration and follow-up of cancer patients have been initiated in Denmark and France, and are being considered in some other countries.

Note: Any enquiry on this Notice should first be addressed to the Press Officer, Ministry of Health, who, by arrangement between the two Departments, acts also as Press Officer for the General Register Office.

* "Studies on Medical and Population Subjects, No. 3—Cancer Registration in England and Wales." H.M. Stationery Office, price 2s. (or post free from P.O. Box 569, London, S.E.1, price 2s. 2d.).

What to Read.

BIOGRAPHIES AND MEMOIRS

- "Peacocks in Paradise." Elisabeth Inglis Jones.
- "The Life of Dr. John Radcliffe." Campbell R. Hone.
- "Me—Looking Back." Naomi Jacob.
- "The Royal Fitz-Roys." Bernard Falk.

FICTION

- "The Hidden Fairing." N. Brysson Morrison.
- "An Inch of Taper." Hugh Talbot.
- "A Flower for Catherine." Frank Swinnerton.
- "Green Felicity." Elizabeth Hargreaves.
- "The Gothic House." Jean Ross.
- "Morning for Mr. Prothero." Jane Oliver.
- "The Loved and Envied." Enid Bagnold.
- "Helene." Evelyn Waugh.
- "Mud on my Nylons." Elizabeth Varley.

ANTHOLOGY

- "Under Italian Skies." Arthur Stanley.

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