

REVIEWS

Recent Advances in Social Medicine. By A. C. STEVENSON. 1950. J. and A. Churchill, London. Pp. 241. (18s.)

This book consists of a series of essays on certain selected topics. It by no means covers the whole field of Social Medicine and it does not in its range make reference to quite a number and variety of recent papers dealing with matters that could undoubtedly be included within this field. The author has pleased himself in his selection and he has chosen to deal with the general theme of the health of young children. He not only reviews the work that has been done, but he examines it critically and presents his own opinion based upon his judgement. For example, in dealing with the communal day nursery he shares the view that for those under the age of two such an institution is not wholly satisfactory. For those aged two to five years the author is of opinion that the communal nursery has become a necessity owing to the existence of certain social and economic disorders which are present in our society and which are inimical to family life.

The author deals very sympathetically and most intelligently with the problems created by illegitimacy. The chapter on the problem family is exceedingly well written, for it not only displays the scientific attributes of the author but also his artistic quality. His description is exact, but it is also vivid.

Other topics dealt with are the Pulheems system, the adolescent in industry, psychosomatic illness and social medicine, school medical inspection, and infant mortality (two chapters). There is an interesting contribution to the book in the form of a chapter by Dr. Cheeseman on applications of statistical methods.

This book is strongly recommended to post-graduate medical students, particularly to those who are proceeding to the Diploma of Public Health and to the Diploma of Child Health.

F. A. E. Crew

Studies in Population. Edited by GEORGE F. MAIR. 1949. Princeton University Press, U.S.A. 1950. Geoffrey Cumberlege, London. (20s.)

Demography, like charity, covers a multitude of sins, and the factors which influence the development of populations are so manifold that it is hardly possible to discover a field of human activity in which the demographer need not be interested. Social factors such as housing conditions, educational standards, and nutritional levels, economic relationships between employer and employed, or between landlord and tenant, agricultural and industrial productivity, medical advances in eradicating disease and prolonging life—these are but a few of the fields into which the demographer must delve in order to estimate what the future

will bring. And these estimates of future trends are of vital importance, both to the highly industrialized countries in which population growth has virtually ceased, and to the Malthusian countries whose conditions of living and dying make it almost impossible for their peoples to increase their subsistence. The world to-day faces the conflicting problems of increasing population pressure in the main food-producing regions and increasing industrial productivity by the food-consumers elsewhere. To the solution of these problems the demographer can contribute an understanding of the past which will form a basis for planning in the future.

“Studies in Population” is the first published report of the proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, and is to be welcomed in making available much material of vital interest to students of demographic and social matters. The five sections cover not only the tools and techniques of demography, but current problems of marital dissolution, length of working life, food resources, and value systems affecting fertility. Though the subject-matter is diverse, the inter-relation is clear, and the papers in the two sections on current problems are of particular interest in their realistic approach to real and urgent problems.

It is perhaps regrettable, though understandable, that demography has in the past concerned itself more with refinements of measures of reproduction and fertility than with the man-made environment in which reproduction takes place. Much of this book deals with such measures, and with projected research into further refinements; and if these measures are subordinated to sociological factors, and not used mechanically to describe immutable population “laws”, they can add to the tools for demographic research.

Another section of this book, which deals with moral value systems and their influence on actual behaviour, brings out some interesting arguments of the perpetual war between scientific and religio-ethical approaches. But to most readers, the papers on food supply and potentialities, and the discussion which follows, will be among the most important as well as the most interesting contributions. The material in this book is evidence of much serious and original research, and as such is to be recommended to a wide public. *Lilli Stein*