

by a young man ogling a passing damsel.

These are shock tactics designed to keep the reader awake and for the same reason there are sporadic outbursts of versification, of which the following is an example:

When injury's urban it's not so disturbin',
The neuro-surgeon can let out the clot;
Acute sub-dural may often be rural—
It's up to the doctor who's on the spot.

In his preface the author says "The student who yawns after a few pages of a textbook will read avidly from a paperback". He may well be right, and certainly his pictures and rhymes do lighten a subject which can be very heavy. Following his lead I conclude with a few lines of my own:

A neuro-surgeon who lives in Australia
Thinks most surgical textbooks a failure.
They stay on the shelf,
So he wrote one himself,
What he's written and drawn will regale yer.

Principles of medical statistics. Ninth edition.
SIR AUSTIN BRADFORD HILL, C.B.E., PH.D.,
F.R.S. London. The Lancet Ltd. 1971.
Pp. i + 390. Price: £1.25.

This ninth edition of a world-famous book first published in 1937 will without doubt be as valuable as previous editions which have already been translated into four languages including Russian. The basic principles do not change and are as valid as when stated in the first edition. Illustration of the principle may require modernization, for instance, as the author himself points out, by using figures relating to measles vaccine rather than serum treatment of measles. On the other hand new concepts arise and have led to many additions such as discussions of the null hypothesis; the value of placebos and the use of matched pairs in clinical trials; and the difficulties of deciding what in life can be regarded as normal.

Perhaps the most interesting new chapter is one on Statistical Evidence and Inference, or, as the author puts it, a brief peroration on the use and abuse of techniques. If a trial using an enormous number of statistics produces a statistically significant result, was the result worth knowing? Quite probably not if so large a number was really needed; and so on.

We should all know a little about statistics; that the level of statistical significance is a measure of the possibility that a conclusion may have been reached by chance. Long odds do turn up even when all the recognized precautions have been taken. Sometimes they have not, but the author gives good guidance on when and when not to believe.

Statistics is never light reading and requires

concentration even in those genuinely interested in figures. In the hands of Bradford Hill it is made as clear and readable as can be expected. No doubt his book will remain as popular in the future as it has deservedly been in the past and it should be the first choice of any general practitioner requiring statistical knowledge.

Antiques of the pharmacy. LESLIE G. MATTHEWS,
F.S.A., F.P.S. London. G. Bell & Sons. 1971.
Pp. viii + 120. Illustrated. Price £3.50.

Who can resist the rows of apothecaries jars still sometimes to be seen in chemists shop windows? These containers were once in regular use as part of the shop fittings; the giant specie jars filled with dried drugs and spices—rhubarb, flowers of sulphur, arrowroot, and the carboys filled with coloured water and prominently placed to lure customers towards the shop by their reflected light. What did the apothecary sell? When did he cease to be the family adviser and become the retailer of pills and potions? Questions like these have never been satisfactorily answered. This charming book by Mr Leslie Matthews, an acknowledged authority on the history of pharmacy, will help the student of social medicine to solve these and many other related problems. A clear knowledge of what the pharmacist sold at different times is essential to an understanding of the development of medical practice.

Antiques in pharmacy is primarily directed to the collector and dealer in these by-gones. During recent years great interest has been shown in these fascinating objects: they are increasingly sought after and their price has accordingly escalated. Mr Matthews classifies them accordingly to the material from which they were made; there are chapters on pottery, glass and wooden objects. All of these are informative and the examples are well chosen. He then deals with medicine chests and cases, pharmacy in print, including caricatures, and proprietary medicines.

Only seldom does the sure pen of Mr Matthews falter. The boat-shaped feeding bottles of the first half of the nineteenth century certainly had a central opening on the upper side for filling, but it was nearly always too large for the mother to be able to control the flow of milk covering it with her thumb. Your reviewer has one such, but the usual stopper was a cork with a turned wooden cap, and this was punctured with a hole large enough to allow air to enter and a free flow of food through the parchment "nipple". The first feeding bottle to be fitted with a thermometer was patented by Webber in 1867, some years before Allenbury's bottle was marketed, though whether Webber ever manufactured the bottle is not known.