mass having been observed in the macular region during life. This
mass was found to consist chiefly of hyaline connective tissue, 
situated between the retina and choroid. Its outer half was supplied 
with blood vessels which had come from the choroid through small 
defects in Bruch's membrane, but the inner half was almost 
avascular. The neuro-epithelium of the portion of retina which 
lay over the mass was completely destroyed. Holloway and 
Verhoeff suggest that the mass was formed by proliferation of cells 
of the pigment epithelium, because, at the periphery, all transition 
stages from normal pigment cells to pigmented spindle cells, and 
finally into unpigmented cells indistinguishable from connective 
tissue cells, could be made out. This metaplasia of the pigment 
epithelium was probably due to impaired nutrition consequent on 
choroidal vascular sclerosis.

F. A. W.-N.

BOOK NOTICE

Benevenutus Grassus of Jerusalem. De Oculis Eorumque Egri-
tudinibus et Curis. Translated, with notes and illustrations, from 
the First Printed Edition, Ferrara, 1474 A.D., by CASEY 
A. WOOD, M.D., LL.D. California: Stanford University 
Press, and London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University 

We extend a cordial welcome to this work which reflects the 
greatest credit on Dr. Casey Wood and, indeed, on all concerned 
in its production.

Ophthalmic surgeons should be proud of the fact that among the 
incunabula, i.e., books printed before 1500 A.D., and thus in the 
swaddling-clothes stage of printing, two, the Ferrara Grassus and 
Anton Sorg's finely printed edition of the De Oculo Morali of 
Archbishop John de Peckham, should find a place. The latter work 
is not the work of a practical ophthalmologist, and in it, as Dr. 
Casey Wood says, "the eye serves as a peg on which to hang saintly 
saws and religious dogmas." Grassus, on the other hand, was for 
more than 500 years the most popular text-book on ophthalmology, 
holding its own throughout the Middle Ages. It is an intensely 
practical work and well repays study even to-day. Some of the 
descriptions of disease, notably those of trachoma and pterygium, 
would pass muster even now. Grassus recognised seven types of 
cataract, four of which were curable and three incurable; he issues 
a warning against operating on unsuitable cases which may be
remembered with advantage for all time. His surgical treatment of cataract was, of course, couching; he solemnly admonishes his hearers, after the cataract has been depressed from the region of the pupil, to hold it down till they have said four *pater noster*.

He recognised the connection between *muscae volitantes* and black bile. He is always careful to pay due attention to the general health; he is altruistic enough to remind his hearers that they should treat the poor gratuitously; if, however, the patient be wealthy and costly drugs, such as powdered pearls, be indicated in the treatment, they should be used. His topical applications sound for the most part bland and unirritating; and his armamentarium is singularly free from the nasty messes that formed so great a part of mediaeval therapeutics.

Not the least interesting part of the book is the translator's scholarly preface, while much botanical and pharmaceutical lore is to be found in the footnotes which explain the composition of the ingredients in use.

The actual year of publication of this Ferrara text may not be a matter of certainty, but Dr. Casey Wood supplies cogent arguments for placing it in 1474, the year before the *De Oculo Morali* was published. The late Professor Hirschberg was of the opinion that Grassus was a renegade Jew. Dr. Casey Wood questions this supposition; he thinks that this book "does not necessarily picture an apostate Jew adding enough Christian savor to leaven the heretical text . . . but rather the act of a prudent printer-publisher who . . . brought the work 'up-to-date' by introducing, here and there, a few churchly maxims."

There are 22 manuscripts and about 18 printed editions of this work extant, the earliest manuscript being the thirteenth century Provençal codex now in the library of the University of Basel. Dr. Casey Wood's researches have located eight copies of this Ferrara edition; three in America; one in the library of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and the rest on the continent, one each at Rome and Naples and two in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.

The facsimile illustrations of three pages of the Ferrara text, with pages of the Provençal and Bodleian codices add greatly to the interest and value of the book. The printers deserve great commendation for the really beautiful type, paper and format of this book which fills a notable gap in ophthalmic literature. British and American ophthalmology owes much to Dr. Casey Wood; we hope that he will be able to see his way to giving us a translation of Peckham's work, which would place copies of the ophthalmic incunabula within the reach of us all.