Book reviews

Surgery of Ptosis. By SIDNEY A. FOX. Pp. 165. US\$36.00 Williams and Wilkins: Baltimore, Maryland. 1980.

This book starts with a very interesting historical review of ptosis surgery and clearly demonstrates that many of the so-called 'new' procedures were first described over 100 years ago. The various operations are discussed in clear groups related to the source of power used to lift the eyelid, namely, the frontalis, levator, or superior rectus muscles. The aim of the book is to try to simplify the whole subject of ptosis surgery, and the author achieves it in various ways. His classification of ptosis removes the old terminology of congenital and acquired and replaces it with a more appropriate classification based on aetiology. In the examination of a patient with ptosis great stress is laid on the importance of the levator function and less on the degree of ptosis or the aetiology. The choice of operation is deliberately kept simple and clear, and the chapter on complications is similarly excellent, though many people would not share the author's dislike of the posterior approach for a levator recession in ptosis cases which have been overcorrected. It is only in the chapter on the definition and management of 'complicated' ptosis that the author loses some of his usual clarity and fails to stress some of the simple things, such as the value of exploring a case of traumatic ptosis under a local anaesthetic.

Although the emphasis of the book is on keeping the subject of ptosis simple, the author does include some highly valuable and specialised contributions such as the recognition of a late spontaneous group of myogenic ptosis. It is thus a book written primarily for general ophthalmologists prepared to do some ptosis surgery, by a man with a lifetime's experience of the subject, and as such is a valuable contribution and well worth reading.

J. R. O. COLLIN

Retinal Detachment: Diagnosis and Management. By WILLIAM EDMUNDS BENSON. Pp. 196. £17.95. Harper and Row: London. 1980.

This book serves as an excellent introduction to the subject of retinal detachment. The first 3 chapters deal crisply with primary retinal detachment, pathophysiology, and predisposing conditions. Chapter 4 deals with the history of retinal detachment. Though interesting, it seems to be of somewhat inappropriate length in a book of this size. Chapter 5, dealing with differential diagnosis, is particularly effective. Chapter 6 deals with the examination of the patient. Many useful tips on the use of the indirect ophthalmoscope are given which the beginner will find of particular benefit. The author's advocacy of mydriasis for examination of the patient is not obvious from Fig. 6/28. Chapter 7 deals with basic surgical technique and Chapter 8 with the surgery of complicated cases.

My overall impression of this book is that it is well laid out, and easy to read. The illustrations are mostly excellent, with the exception of some of the black-and-

white photographs. There is an excellent bibliography for each chapter allowing the reader to pursue further aspects of the subject, and I particularly like the appendix, which deals with various clinical situations treated in a way that the author favours.

My main criticism of this book is that it is a generalised account of retinal detachment rather than an attempt to give the reader guidelines on how to perform the correct operation to achieve retinal reattachment. It is for this reason that I found Chapters 7 and 8 rather weak. The author prefers to discuss the various options available without giving clear-cut indications of the various methods described. For example, the reader will not be clear about the concepts concerning the drainage and nondrainage of subretinal fluid. Nor do the role and indications for the encirclement procedure appear to be clear.

Although the author has tried to put the options of the various surgical procedures forward, on some occasions he appears to be advocating methods favoured by senior American ophthalmological opinion, rather than techniques he personally would advocate. Thus British readers would be surprised to see the advocacy of diathermy still included in a modern book on retinal detachment surgery. I certainly enjoyed reading the book and found some features of it instructive, and I would warmly recommend it to all ophthalmologists seeking a general introduction to the subject of retinal detachment.

A. H. CHIGNELL

The Large Print Book and its User. By LORNA J. BELL. Pp. 326. £12.50. The Library Association: London. 1980.

Lorna Bell has been acting as a researcher for the Library Association for some years on the problems of the visually disabled and reading. This book presents the results of some years' effort in the field. To the reader of this journal her material presents many useful insights as to how patients actually behave in real life rather than in the clinical situation.

Mrs Bell points out that the definitions of blind and partially sighted are anachronistic and take no account of near vision or leisure activities, and that definitions based on ability to work are largely irrelevant in a group the vast majority of whom are over retirement age. The study found that of the people who elected to read large-print books relatively few were registered, a finding consistent with other studies.

A profile of the readers of large print emerged. They tended to be old, female, relatively immobile, and with a very unsophisticated choice of literature. Mrs Bell makes the point that, while they chose romances and adventure stories, their choice was very much limited by the availability of titles. Most of the group too expressed an interest in newspapers and magazines not, unfortunately, available in large print. While the book read straight made interesting reading, your reviewer found herself dipping and picking up many fascinating snippets. It is probably in this way that it will be of benefit to readers of this journal. Certainly it makes one aware of the situation outside the somewhat artificial atmosphere of the consulting room and of the need to improve communications about the real needs and desires of visually disabled people.

JANET SILVER