The International Congress and Ophthalmic Literature

The suggestion made by the Council of International Ophthalmological Congresses that all ophthalmic journals should publish in each issue the titles of the original articles appearing in all other ophthalmic journals is one that, if carried out efficiently, should be of considerable assistance to all students of ophthalmic literature. A scheme of this nature was attempted some years ago by the Ophthalmic Review, now merged with this journal, but fell through on account of the labour involved. This difficulty would be considerably reduced if all journals would agree with a proposal made to this journal by Dr. Morax, the editor of the Annales d'Oculistique. He proposes to exchange with each issue a proof of the contents of the two journals. This we have arranged to do, and would be very glad to make a similar exchange with any other ophthalmic journals willing to co-operate.

Colour Vision

On page 633 of this number of the journal we publish the Report of a Committee of the British Association upon Colour Vision—"with particular reference to the classification of Colour-blindness." We venture to express the opinion that no good—and possibly positive harm—is done by dogmatic statements such as are contained in this report, especially when issued under the aegis of a great society of acknowledged scientific prestige. Destructive criticism is little to our taste, unless it takes the form of further scientific investigation and research; but, lest silence should be interpreted as giving consent, reasons must be adduced for an adverse verdict. We shall mention only a few.

Thus, paragraph 1 is probably true, but it has not been proved, and there are cases which have been held by competent observers to indicate the opposite. Is it then a reform to introduce a new nomenclature which may prove as faulty as the old? In the present state of ignorance, if paragraph 2 is accepted—"one must know the actual differences in colour discrimination between normal and hypochromatic individuals"—the quest is vain for it is an as yet unattained counsel of perfection. Paragraphs 4 to 6 conform to the principle that it is well to be off with the old love before one is on with the new, but unless the individual's reasoning capacity is submerged by the waves of emotion he will first decide that the new is better than the old. The old terms
protanopia or red blindness, deuteranopia or green blindness, etc., are admittedly founded upon a hypothesis which may or may not be true, but their correlates scoterythrous and photerythrous were invented by Rivers for the express purpose of removing this objection. Rivers, indeed, introduced them when he himself was an adherent of the Hering theory; so he at any rate thought that they described two relatively well defined groups of cases, independently of any theory. However, if one is going to be off with the old it is just as well to do it thoroughly. But, mirabile dictu, red blindness pops up again in the new classification (paragraph 7). Will not this make confusion worse confounded? Because now it has got a brand new meaning: it "indicates decreased sensitivity to long wave-lengths."

Note to 7 (a) tells us that "the best method of showing the defect is to present a curve showing the increase in threshold to light of the region involved." What does this mean? Does it refer to the general threshold or to the chromatic threshold? Surely this ought to be defined, since (paragraph 3) "defects in colour discrimination are not always accompanied by decrease in sensitivity to light"! Further [Note to 7 (b)], "Both normal and hypochromatic individuals use differences in brightness as an aid to colour discrimination, therefore some method should be used in which comparisons are made of lights of unequal brightness." Is not this a non-sequitur? Surely the lights for the tests ought all to be of the same brightness—as in the Board of Trade Lantern recommended by the Sight Tests Committee.

ABSTRACTS

I.—GLAUCOMA


(1) Hamburger, following the suggestion of Ehrlich that the usual theory of the nutrition of the eye could not be correct, attacked the problem afresh in 1897. The results of his work are set out in "Über die Ernährung des Auges," which he published in 1914. Believing that glaucoma must be due to a relaxation of the vaso-constrictor mechanism, causing dilatation of the blood-vessels and repletion of the eye with blood, which effect is most pronounced in the choroid, he proposed the use of synthetic supra-