CORRESPONDENCE

CATARACT

To the Editor of The British Journal of Ophthalmology

Sir,—The derivation of the word "cataract" suggested by John Scott quoted by Mr. R. R. James in the January number of this Journal is probably incorrect. The Arabic word for cataract literally translated is "the water that falls from above." In the colloquial Arabic of Palestine and Egypt it is always "Moyezerka" or "blue water," and the natives tell us that they have "water in the eyes." Even in England patients tell us that "they seem to be looking through water." I cannot find the word κατάρακτης in my abridged Liddell and Scott, but κατάρρακτης is given as a "water-fall." Probably the Arabic term is far older than Herodotus, and it is highly improbable that the ancients knowing nothing of the real nature of cataract would liken it to a gate or portcullis. It would be interesting to know whether the Indian and Chinese words for cataract suggest "water."

Yours truly,

T. Harrison Butler.

Birmingham.

January 5, 1927.

According to the lexicons there is authority for spelling the Greek word either way. While it is true that the most usual meaning of the word is a waterfall, the literal translation being a bursting down; there is authority for several other meanings. Diodorus uses the word to mean a dam, weir, or rather a sluice. Sophocles, in Oedipus at Colonus uses it to denote the downward entrance (of Hades), while other authors use it to mean a portcullis. Liddell and Scott give a reference to Herodotus where the name κατάρρακτης denotes a river in Phrygia. Perhaps Scott got mixed in his reference.—Editors.

PROPTOSIS IN THE NEW-BORN

To the Editor of The British Journal of Ophthalmology

Sir,—On reading Mr. Rao's article on the above subject in the current number of the Brit. Jl. of Ophthal. we observed that the author does not seem to have been previously acquainted with the condition which he describes as proptosis, but which is frequently referred to as "dislocation" of the eyeball. Since Mr. Rao will doubtless continue to be interested in this subject, and in ocular birth injuries in general, we take the liberty of referring him to our joint papers on ocular birth injuries which will be found in the Trans. Ophthal. Soc., U.K. for the year 1923 and also in the same Transactions about to be published for 1926. With special