

BOOK NOTICES

Allergy and Immunity in Ophthalmology. By ALLAN C. WOODS, M.D. Pp. 162. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press. 1933. Price 13/-.

Although allergy to certain foods is an old conception and as long ago as the first century Lucretius wrote: "What is food to one man may be fierce poison to others," yet, it is still a new conception as the underlying cause of certain phenomena in disease. It is the author's object in this book to present a digest of the present knowledge and theories concerning it. The word allergy was originally defined as "the changed reaction capacity which animals or man may gain through recovery from disease or treatment with foreign substance," and is now used to denote any form of hypersensitiveness not falling under the strict definition of anaphylaxis. The production of allergic phenomena may be specific to certain micro-organisms in a given patient, yet there seems to be a common fundamental cause for the cell injury which occurs. This may be the production by the antigen antibody reaction of a non-specific histamine-like substance which acts as a poison. The author is careful to state, however, that this is only an hypothesis and that we have as yet no definite knowledge of the exact nature of such a phenomenon. In the first two chapters of his book he gives an interesting account of the work which has been done on this subject and its bearing on disease. The remaining chapters deal with the relations of allergy to focal reactions in the eye, to conjunctivitis, syphilis and tuberculosis. There is a chapter on the antigenic properties of lens protein and uveal pigment and the book concludes with one on therapeutic procedures such as milk injections and inoculations of vaccine. The theoretical bases for these are explored by the author, but as yet, no really satisfactory explanation seems to be forthcoming. In spite of this, however, "Allergy and Immunity" should prove a profitable book for the ophthalmologist to read. The literature on the subject is enormous and quite beyond the scope of the ordinary reader, whereas in the book under review, it is condensed into 166 pages. The author states in his preface that "the effort has been made . . . to present the conflicting views, and at times to evaluate the present status of debated subjects." The first part of this task he has admirably performed, but one could wish that he had placed more emphasis upon the second part, since by not doing so, his book becomes rather impersonal and lacks that touch of individuality which would make it more valuable. What the reader of a book of this kind wants is not so much a collection of varied and sometimes contradictory data and theories, as a solid expression of the author's opinion on them.