Summary

In connection with an operation for retrobulbar haemangioma, a seven year old girl got a lagophthalmic corneal ulcer which developed into a descemetocoele. Four attempts elsewhere to close the ulcer with a conjunctival flap did not lead to the desired result. The wound got larger, and there was danger of perforation. A scleral disc was punched out of the same eye and transplanted into the wound, after the edges of the latter had been excised. The graft was covered with conjunctiva. The result was good: the transplant fitted in comfortably, the ulcer closed, and vision was comparatively good.

ANNOTATION

Sir Charles Sherrington, O.M., F.R.S.

Sir Charles Sherrington celebrated his ninetieth birthday on November 27 last. When we remember that some of his experiments on ocular movements and visual phenomena provided the most crucial evidence for great discoveries, it is a fitting and altogether congenial duty that ophthalmologists should add their quota to the paean of praise. His investigations of muscle spindles and the afferent nerve fibres from extrinsic eye muscles initiated his study of proprioceptive nerves; and this in turn led to the discovery of the physiological substrata of posture as fully elaborated by him and by his pupil Magnus. It was, too, from conjugate movements of the eye, induced by stimulation of the frontal ocular motor area, that he obtained some of the strongest evidence of the inhibition of antagonistic muscles, thus again opening up a vast new conception of active processes other than mere excitation occurring in motor phenomena.

Pure mathematicians are always anxious to obtain the neatest and most "beautiful" solution of a problem. Sherrington's experiments on binocular vision belong to this category. They prove the absence of simple summation of the responses from the two eyes; but the philosophical meaning goes far beyond so simple a fact. They show that "for each eye the sensorium carries elaboration of sub-perceptual and perceptual vision to a considerable pitch of mental completeness without marked collaboration between the visual processes of the two eyes."

Of even more far-reaching importance were his experiments on cortical motor areas, which broke down the jejune idea of mere anatomical representation of muscular action in the cortex cerebri, and so "first within the brain discerned the meaning of its ordered
ways, and man of his own nature learned to thread the labyrinthine maze” (W. Russell Brain*). At the hands of his pupil Granit, the processes of excitation, facilitation, inhibition, and so on, demonstrated by Sherrington in the spinal cord, have been shown to regulate impulses in the retina and optic nerve. This isolated mass of brain, with its equally isolated intra-cerebral pathway, the optic nerve and optic tract, are thus shown to be a specially favourable locus for future experimentation. And so Sherrington has been led on from “The Integrative Action of the Nervous System” to the profound philosophical conception of the relationship of body and mind contained in “Man on his Nature.”

Great then are Sherrington’s scientific claims to greatness—claims which, as has been pointed out, justify comparison with Harvey, marking an epoch in biology. And those who have had the privilege of knowing Sherrington, the man, realize that his meticulous scientific integrity is combined with an endearing kindliness, and a modesty without which no man is truly great.

FACULTY OF OPHTHALMOLOGISTS

Report of Council Meeting
on October 10

The Honorary Secretary drew attention to the very brief report of the Faculty’s activities that had appeared in the British Medical Journal and the Lancet, as compared with that in the British Journal of Ophthalmology. It was agreed that the Honorary Secretary should ask the British Medical Journal and the Lancet to realise that the report was already cut to a minimum and to ask for it to be printed as submitted.

The Faculty had asked the British Medical Association to confirm the statement that compensation would be given for consultant practices and a reply has been received that the buying and selling of consultant practices in general was not prohibited by the National Health Service Act and for this reason the compensation provisions of the Act did not extend beyond the cases of general practitioners whose names were entered “on the appointed day on any list of medical practitioners undertaking to provide general medical services.”

It was reported that the Medico-Political Standing Committee had submitted a Memorandum to the Evidence Committee, sitting under the Chairmanship of the President of the Royal College of Surgeons, on the remuneration of consultants and specialists.