BOOK REVIEWS


The injuries sustained during the recent war undoubtedly provided a mass of material for reformatory and reconstructive surgery on a scale never before reached, because of the high survival rate of the wounded which was rendered possible by such life-saving measures as blood transfusion and abiotic drugs. This book records the author’s experience of some three thousand such cases with injuries of the eye and its adnexa as well as large numbers of typical injuries of the civilian type, many of which have been followed up for five or six years—a matter of some importance since many reparative procedures which appear immediately satisfactory do not stand the test of time. Injuries to the eye itself are discussed systematically, each with the appropriate treatment—to the conjunctiva, cornea, sclera, uveal tract, lens, and retina. Intracocular foreign bodies, the removal of the eye, and lacerations of the lids and lacrimal passages are described, and special chapters are devoted to the correction of the deformity of retraction of the upper lid after excision of the eye by the implantation of fascia lata anterior to the tarso-orbital fascia, and to the realignment of the common dislocation of the canthi by wiring directly to the bone. The plastic procedures involved in the reconstruction of the lids after injury by pedicle flaps, tube pedicles, and free skin grafts are fully discussed, as well as the different techniques available for dealing with traumatic ptosis. The remainder of the book deals with reconstruction of the fractured orbit and the contracted socket, and the use of prostheses.

No attempt is made to describe large numbers of alternative methods of treatment, but the techniques which in the author’s practice have given the best results are presented in considerable detail; the volume is thus a personal record of much value. Walker’s micropins are used in retinal detachment, the posterior route is employed for the removal of foreign bodies from the vitreous in a technique wherein the magnet is put up to a trephine hole in the sclera, an Allen implant or buried spheres of methyl methacrylate are advised after excision, and in bony injuries of the orbit considerable use is made of grafts of bone and cartilage and implants of acrylic resin and tantalum to repair deficiencies in the orbital walls or to camouflage residual deformities.

The book is luxuriously printed and beautifully illustrated. It may be questioned, however, whether the modern habit of publishing purely technical books in so lavish a style is necessary or advisable if it makes a relatively small volume so extremely expensive.


Eye problems have assumed such an importance and such a proportion in industry that they constitute a speciality within a speciality. They are much beyond the scope of the layman and, indeed, carry implications which can only rightly be understood and dealt with by the eye-doctor. But even he cannot, with modern requirements, be expected to solve such problems satisfactorily without previous knowledge of the industrial factors which condition them. This book is an attempt to enlighten the oculist regarding aspects of his work which normally lie outside his usual practice.
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The author exhorts ophthalmologists to overcome their antipathy to statisticians. A man, on engagement, should be ocularly fit for the top job in his particular department. Though the best and quickest work is obtained from those whose sight is normal at the required working distance, a certain latitude is permissible in gross work. Further, good vision means a lower accident rate. The visual requirements are given for clerical and administrative staff, vehicle operators, close machine workers, machine operators, mechanical and skilled workers, and labourers with a covering note that there are jobs so highly specialized that they do not come into any of the above groups. Careful assessment of the tasks to be performed is necessary before glasses are prescribed.

There is a very full discussion of industrial eye diseases and injuries and their treatment. It is stated that 20/15 and not 20/20 should be considered normal vision and that a monocular cataract should be operated on and a correcting glass given even though the vision of the other eye is normal without correction.

Finally, several formulae are given whereby the binocular visual acuity or amount of disability following accident can be calculated in percentages. Some of these formulae were considered by the now extinct Prevention of Blindness Committee in Great Britain which sat in 1930, but were found to be too inaccurate to ensure that justice was done to the worker's eyes whether healthy or injured.


Clinicians often complain that their medical journals contain too much technical detail about work which is intelligible to only a minority of readers. Methods of investigation tend to grow more complicated until they require a team of special workers, and such people are often constrained to set out results with the aid of mathematical formulae, so that their papers teem with charts, tables, and graphs. The ordinary reader is discouraged by such austere productions, although he may admit that practical methods of diagnosis and therapy can seldom be devised without long preliminary experimentation. Most laboratory research workers have little or no direct familiarity with clinical details, and only a smattering of physics and biochemistry lingers in the mind of the average clinician. What right therefore have we to expect a satisfactory account of modern developments in our subject from two busy practising ophthalmologists?

Sir Stewart Duke-Elder and Mr. Goldsmith have brilliantly supplied the answer. Mere assiduous compilation from the literature could easily have produced something like "the Sahara in salt-spoonsful", but this book presents facts and theories which have not only been studied but also cleverly arranged and submitted to critical assessment. These good qualities owe much to Sir Stewart's early training in physics, biochemistry, and experimental physiology, and to Mr. Goldsmith's intensive knowledge of ocular pathology. Both authors have the gift of describing clinical phenomena, and they correlate the signs observed in glaucoma with facts gleaned from the laboratory. New work on corneal permeability is helpfully reviewed, special attention being drawn to its bearing upon the choice of therapeutic excipients, and upon the question of prognosis after injury by different chemical substances. Similarly, the pathology of the lens is considered in close relation to modern discoveries regarding metabolism.