

BOOK REVIEWS

Le champ visuel—Topographie, normale et pathologique, de ses sensibilités. By A. DUBOIS-POULSEN. 1952. Published under the auspices of the Société française d'Ophthalmologie. Masson, Paris. Pp. 1175, 820 figs (4 plates).

The author, with his collaborators, has set out to provide a comprehensive study of all aspects of visual field examination, and a perusal of this volume leaves no doubt as to the success of the endeavour. For too long, Dubois-Poulsen believes, the investigation of visual field defects has meant nothing more than an outline of the peripheral limits and of localized central field changes, using a technique which varies from one examination to the next.

An histological introduction precedes the first part of the work, which provides a full exposition of the physiological principles and anatomical features underlying perimetric and campimetric studies. Included in this part of the book are chapters devoted to the definition of the limits of the visual fields, and to the importance of the qualitative and quantitative physical characters of the stimuli used in their experimental and clinical determination. The author's conception of threshold as a measure of sensitivity forms the basis of recording the topography of the field, and the isoptre is defined as the line joining points of the visual field having the same threshold. Having considered the known data on the topography of the field in conditions of illumination with white light, he makes a detailed study of the visual field during dark adaptation, of flicker perimetry, and of variations in colour sensitivity. The normal blind spot and angioscotomata have been carefully studied, and original work on the action of general factors and of a number of drugs on these scotomata is reported. A detailed description of the anatomical pathways for the visual impulses concludes the first part.

Passing from the precision of the physiological approach to the practical problems encountered in clinical examination, the second part begins with a description of the very many types of instrument used to record the visual fields, and their underlying principles. The clinical methods of perimetric and campimetric examination are, fortunately, fewer in number, and here again the material illustrates the author's determination to omit no relevant detail from the discussion.

After a short chapter on the general physiopathological characteristics of visual field defects follow nine chapters, occupying some 500 pages, devoted to a consideration of the field changes found in virtually any type of ocular pathology in which such changes are to be anticipated. The wealth of personal observations included in this major section of the book is most remarkable.

The appendix includes a simplified explanation of the physical principles of photometry, and those whose memory of this aspect of the subject is not recent might well study this short section before the main work.

The book achieves unity by constant reference to the notion of threshold as the basis for visual field investigations. An interesting observation concerns our uncertain knowledge of the threshold for colours, and in this matter the author concludes that there is little to justify the use of colours as a clinical method of examination.

No review of a book of these proportions, largely the work of a single individual—who generously acknowledges the help he has received from many of his colleagues—, can fail to take the form of an appreciation; there is no doubt that this volume will remain for many years a unique work of reference on the topography of the sensitivity of the visual fields.

Clinical Pathology of the Eye. By BERNARD SAMUELS and ADALBERT FUCHS. 1952. Cassell, London. Pp. 420, 418 illus., 191 col. (7 guineas).

This is a volume of considerable size designed not only to cover the whole of ocular pathology but also to correlate the histological appearances seen in diseased conditions