BOOK REVIEWS


The title of this book gives little indication of the scope of the subjects covered in its text. The author emphasizes in his preface that his object was to produce a book in which refraction and the ocular neuromuscular abnormalities were considered in close relationship with their underlying physiological principles. As a teacher of many years' standing, he has taken advantage of both clinical and classroom experience in the selection of his material. At the same time, where modern advances have, in his opinion, rendered earlier methods of observation and teaching obsolete, reference to these more orthodox views has been omitted or curtailed. The result is a volume in which the practical consideration of refraction tends to take second place to a detailed description of the physiological processes involved in the production and interpretation of visual images.

It is assumed that the reader has a sound basic knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the eye, and of the neuromuscular mechanism in ocular movements. Geometric optics is omitted altogether, except where the optical principles of a method of examination or of an instrument are explained in the course of describing a particular technique, and it is important for the reader to be already acquainted with both geometric and physiological optics. This is somewhat unusual in a text-book of refraction, but has the great advantage that it enables the author to devote more space to subjects which are dealt with in less detail in similar books, and which, strictly speaking, do not normally come within the scope of such a text-book.

About half the book is devoted to the anomalies of accommodation and refraction, the methods of refraction, and the interpretation of the objective and subjective findings, but these apparently closely related problems are placed before and after the remaining half of the text, which deals in meticulous detail with the physiological and psychological aspects of binocular vision and ocular muscle anomalies. By way of contrast, eight chapters are devoted to the theoretical consideration of ocular movements, and only as many pages to the practical application of orthoptics to the problems of heterotropia and heterophoria.

Apart from the curious use of the word "astigmatism", where one is more accustomed to see "astigmatism", the description of the anomalies of refraction and accommodation is orthodox, and is adequate for the student approaching the subject for the first time. The chapters devoted to the methods of refraction include static and dynamic retinoscopy and optical instruments for the measurement of corneal curvature, but among these no mention is made of the Fincham coincidence optometer. Helpful information is given on the use of cycloplegics and mydriatics, and there is a chapter which includes a description of subjective methods in patients with subnormal vision, and a consideration of the optical devices available to give the maximum visual acuity in such cases. The last chapter outlines the author's own system of investigating a refraction case, and of interpreting and correlating the data thus obtained.

This book deals in a quite unorthodox way with the subject of refraction, and lays considerably more emphasis on the contribution of muscle balance to the problem of
visual comfort than one would expect. Its title might justifiably include some reference to its treatment of this part of the subject. Provided that the student for whom it is intended first becomes acquainted with the basic principles involved, he will find that the author’s integration of the problems of refraction with those of the muscular anomalies forms an interesting approach to both subjects. The book itself is well produced, and adequately illustrated, and the appearance of yet another text-book on an already familiar subject can easily be justified by the author’s sincere efforts to help the student better to understand the relative importance of the many factors which must be taken into account in the apparently simple process of prescribing a pair of glasses.


A synopsis is the least satisfactory of all text-books, for it can only draw the accepted outlines of its subject and leave the finer shades and subtleties to others. It cannot be said, however, that the outlines of “A Synopsis of Ophthalmology” are accepted or acceptable: it is doubtful whether the author could find support for his classification of retinitis proliferans as a disease of the vitreous; anyone who has applied surface diathermy to a retinal dialysis knows that visible coagulation takes place in the retina; simple glaucoma has no characteristic prodromal symptoms nor is the tonometer a guide to classification; trephining is neither the nor the best operation for buphthalmos; trauma is only one aetiological possibility in haematoma of the lids; and mixed tumours of the lacrimal gland have long since ceased to be regarded as endotheliomatous. It is presumptuous to imagine that ophthalmology can be usefully discussed within the confines of 238 pages. The experienced ophthalmologist who can be induced to read them will certainly find much to irritate, and the student working for a higher diploma should be similarly affected.

NOTES

PAN-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

The Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Pan-American Association of Ophthalmology, which was held in Mexico D.F. in January, 1952, will be ready for distribution early in June. There will be three volumes of about 500 pages each, most of the contributions being in English. Each volume will cost $20 U.S.A. All enquiries should be addressed to Dr. Luis Sanchez Bulnes, Gomez Farias 16, Mexico D.F., Mexico.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MALARIA AND TROPICAL MEDICINE, 1953

The fifth international congress of malaria and tropical medicine will be held from September 2 to 8, 1953, in Istanbul, Turkey.

In addition to Malaria, sections are planned on the following subjects: Trypanosomiasis, Virus Diseases, Rickettsial Diseases, Schistosomiasis, Filariasis, Nutrition.

The President of the Turkish Organizing Committee is Professor Tefvik Saglam. All communications should be addressed to the Secretary-General, Professor Ihsan Sükrü Aksel, Beyoğlu Tunel Meydani No. 2, Istanbul, Turkey.