BOOK REVIEWS


The first International Congress of Ophthalmology was held in Brussels in 1857; 150 delegates attended from 24 countries and states (all but two from Europe) and 34 official papers were read. The XVII Congress was held in Montreal and New York in 1954; 2,164 delegates attended from seventy countries from all over the world, and more than 194 communications were published. These figures alone emphasize the vitality of the international life of ophthalmology, the story of which, together with those of the International Council and the Federation of Ophthalmological Societies, is fascinatingly told in this short book. The history of international co-operation mirrors not only the great fundamental advances in the specialty, but also the political troubles of the past one hundred years, explaining why the meeting to be held in September, 1958, is not the twenty-sixth of what was originally planned to be a four-yearly series, but only the eighteenth. This year, the centenary (as near as may be) congress is to be held very appropriately in Brussels, the city which first gave it hospitality. By no means its least attractive feature will be this book which explains so lucidly the background against which so many of us will be assembling, pictures what has been achieved in the past, and analyses the possible steps through which the next century may prove even more fruitful.


This little book is designed to aid the student, general physician, and neurologist to interpret ophthalmoscopic appearances. Difficulties which may arise because of opacities of the ocular media are discussed, and the normal and abnormal features of the optic disc and the retinal vessels are described. The book ends with a short description of the retinopathies secondary to vascular disease and such conditions as diabetes.


This is a small volume translated into English by G. H. Hanna from a book written by V. P. Filatov in 1955, the year before he died, and containing what the author considered to be the highlights of his contributions to ophthalmology. These are dealt with in eight chapters, the subjects of which include the tube-flap graft, glaucoma, trachoma, the use of saliva instead of tears, the treatment of seborrhoea of the Meibomian glands, first-aid in eye injuries, corneal grafting, and tissue therapy. The last two are the most important. Filatov’s contributions to the technique of corneal grafting were undoubtedly great, for it was he who introduced the use of cadaver eyes and thereby made possible the popularization of the method. The value of his technique of tissue-therapy is more problematical. It will be remembered that, having observed the clearing of an opaque cornea in the neighbourhood of a graft, he claimed that all living tissue, human, animal, or vegetable,
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when isolated from the organism and retained under conditions that are unfavourable but not lethal, produces “biogenic stimulators”, non-specific substances which have the property of stimulating vital processes in the organ into which they have been introduced. It is quite possible that there is some biological truth in this concept and that a tissue in difficulties produces stimulants which help to preserve its viability and which in turn may similarly stimulate a diseased organ into which they are introduced. It is interesting that Filatov himself agreed that the substances themselves are unknown and that their action appears to be quite non-specific. At the same time, there would be few who would agree that they have any dramatic value in the treatment of diseases such as those in which Filatov himself claimed to have produced a marked therapeutic effect—myopic degeneration, optic atrophy, primary pigmentary degeneration of the retina, and so on. The present volume, however, gives in a simple and concise form his final views on a subject which has excited considerable interest.


(45s.).

This book presents a clear and concise account of the structure and development of the eye and its related structures.

It is written primarily for students of ophthalmic optics, and is designed, therefore, for those who do not possess any background knowledge of general anatomy.

There are several minor errors in the text, and some of the clinical conclusions which are derived from anatomical facts are incorrect, but on the whole the book represents an accurate, non-controversial account of present-day concepts of basic ocular anatomy.


Pp. 423, 90 figs. Year Book Publishers, Chicago. ($7.50; 47s.)

There is now some hope for the world, for the Americans are learning sense; they have at long last realized the relative importance of ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology. This year, for the first time, there is a Year Book of Ophthalmology instead of the Year Book of Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat with which we have had to put up for more than half a century. The result is a more thorough appreciation of ophthalmological progress during the last year, a more useful and interesting book, and a book ophthalmologically pure, without contamination.

The volume is introduced by a long special article on recent advances in ocular therapeutics written by Irving H. Leopold. This is an excellent article which contains a vast amount of information on the treatment of many ocular conditions and includes methods of treatment as different as the chemotherapy of cancer on the one hand, and the use of tranquillizers on the other. The remainder of the book, compiled by Derrick Vail, abstracts the more important papers on all aspects of ophthalmology which have appeared during the year under review, and contains more than twice the number of articles and editorial comments that have been included in the past. The articles are well chosen, their abstraction is full, and the comments—as usual—are short, fearlessly critical, and unusually useful. To the ophthalmologist who wishes to revise or supplement his reading in the current journals, the book will be found indispensable.


Pp. 422, 23 figs, 23 tables, bibl. Saunders, London. (112s.)

In the chapter on complications of cataract surgery Robb MacDonald writes: “The only surgeon who does not have to deal with complications is one who does not operate”. Nevertheless, a book of 422 pages devoted to the management of complications in eye surgery may strike the ophthalmologist as somewhat horrifying until it is realized that
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management is taken to include prevention and much of the discussion concerns prophylaxis. Because the surgical handiwork of colleagues always tends to look better than one's own, it is indeed comforting to find that surgical snags are universal. The book is full of practical advice given by American surgeons of wide experience.

The first three chapters discuss anaesthetic, medical, and psychiatric complications and they are particularly interesting to the ophthalmic surgeon because the responsibility of these aspects of treatment are usually shared with colleagues. There follow chapters on purely ophthalmic subjects: intra-ocular foreign bodies, ptosis, lacrimal surgery, keratoplasty, iris surgery and trauma, glaucoma operations, cataract, extra-ocular muscle surgery, retinal detachment, orbit and lid surgery, and endocrine exophthalmos. The last two chapters discuss rehabilitation of the patient with low visual acuity and the estimation of loss of visual efficiency.

A book which is so practical and explains so many small but important points in technique is not easy to review. It has been written to serve as an advanced reference book and its object has certainly been achieved. It should find its way into the hospital library wherever ocular surgery is practised, and it will pay dividends to the trainee who cares to thumb its pages before he undertakes an operative procedure which is new to him. It is well illustrated and the references for wider reading are chosen with discretion.


The appearance of the second edition of this book within 2 years of its first publication suggests that it is fulfilling a deservedly useful role. As would be expected after so short an interval, there are no radical changes. The 21 extra pages are occupied by a revision and rearrangement of quite a number of sections and the addition of new figures—all of which are improvements on those included in the first edition.

NOTES

OPHTHALMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

Annual Congress, 1958

The 78th Annual Congress of the Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom, held at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cathays Park, Cardiff, on April 17 to 19, 1958, under the presidency of Mr. J. J. Healy, was attended by over one hundred members of the Society and several distinguished foreign guests.

The meeting opened with a discussion on the complications and treatment of the hypermature cataract. Mr. G. T. W. Cashell (Reading) approached the subject historically, describing the various complications of hypermature cataract that had gradually achieved recognition, secondary glaucoma and uveitis being the most important. He described how an anterior hypermature lens may prevent glaucoma and the special difficulties involved in extracting such a lens, and then considered the uveal reactions from escaping Morgagnian fluid, whether phaco-anaphylactic toxic or anaphylactic. Lastly, he dealt with rupture of the zonule with anterior or posterior dislocation of the hypermature cataract.

Mr. C. A. G. Cook (London) then considered and illustrated the pathological aspects of these complications, which he described under two main headings: the first comprising complications leading primarily to the production of glaucoma, and the second including conditions in which the primary pathological change is of an inflammatory nature which may or may not be responsible eventually for a secondary increase in intra-ocular pressure.