BOOK REVIEW


One of the most important, intriguing and, so far, intractable problems in ophthalmology is the maintenance of corneal transparency, an attribute unique among organized and relatively thick layers of tissue in the animal world. It must be admitted that this book does not answer the problem but it does give a fascinating picture of its complexity, of some of the major factors involved, of the lines of approach, present and past, by students in this field, and of the vast amount of work that has been done with the new techniques of phase-contrast and electron microscopy and of special staining, and in the field of biochemistry. In this symposium 22 authors have contributed papers under nineteen headings, each paper being followed by an interestingly argumentative discussion. The factors with which we are all familiar, the anatomical structure, metabolism, permeability, deturgescence, and the biochemical stability of the collagen-mucopolysaccharide complex are all important, but none in itself provides the complete answer; all these are interdependent and in this work they are fully discussed, together with such other factors as the physical properties and healing processes of the cornea, and the inductions and deductions which may be made from corneal vascularization, degenerations, and the results, good as well as bad, of clinical and experimental transplantation operations.

The ideal subject for a symposium is, very often, one that nobody knows much about. Many of us will be familiar with Macaulay’s characteristic and caustic strictures of a work which he described as “deserving the praise, for what that phrase may be worth, of being the best book ever written by any man on the wrong side of a subject on which he was profoundly ignorant”. Such a comment obviously applies to a monograph. The report of a good symposium such as this stands in sharp contradistinction. The dedicated search for truth, coupled with the frank admission of ignorance of basic essentials, is everywhere evident. The contributors to the discussion are warmly to be congratulated not only on their industry, but also on their frankness. They cannot fail to have profited from their interchange of views and their hours of discussion. Those of us who read this work will profit also in knowledge and in inspiration.

NOTES

Dr. J. Clement McCulloch has been appointed Professor of Ophthalmology and Head of the Department in the University of Toronto, succeeding Dr. A. J. Elliot who has joined the staff of the University of British Columbia.

CORRIGENDA

It is regretted that, in the article entitled “Experimental Hemeralopia uncomplicated by Xerophthalmia in Macacus rhesus” by F. C. Rodger, A. D. Grover, and A. Fazal, which appeared in the February issue (Brit. J. Ophthalm., 1961, 45, 96), the blocks of Figs 3 and 4 (p. 103) have been transposed. Fig. 3 should be Monkey 7, deficient in vitamin A, and Fig. 4 should be the control.

Similarly, on p. 104, Fig. 5 should be Monkey 6, deficient in vitamin A, and Fig. 6 should be the control.

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