**Book reviews**


These ophthalmic classics, originally published between 1267 and 1952, appeared in their present form, with historical notes and a short biography of each author, in the periodical *Survey of Ophthalmology* between 1956 and 1969. Their collection into one volume makes fascinating reading. This book is thoroughly recommended to both residents and established ophthalmologists.


The introduction of electronic averaging devices has made possible the detection of very small bioelectric potentials and their separation from potentials from neighbouring structures. In this way it is possible to detect a change of activity in the occipital cortex due to stimulation of the eye. Many workers have studied this phenomenon in recent years and this book is an attempt to review and correlate their efforts. The authors are well fitted to the task as they have considerable experience in both the experimental and clinical aspects of the subject.

The early studies elicited the response with a flash of light but subsequently more sophisticated patterned stimuli were used. These later methods also involved a change in illumination, so that the only information that one could reasonably expect to gain was that a change of illumination had been perceived. This is a considerable achievement when the information can be gained in no other way. The attempts to obtain more information, by varying the stimulus, by picking up the response from different parts of the scalp, or by analysing the signal in various ways, are described in some detail. Unfortunately, the results of different workers are often different or even contradictory. This is to be expected in the early days of a complex technique using sophisticated electronic processing.

The authors claim that the book is clinically orientated, but this is far from true for the main body of the work. There is a brief final section on clinical applications which is uninformative and speculative. A very helpful feature, however, is a very extensive bibliography referenced outside the text. It will be invaluable to the worker in the field and will prove a useful source of reference for anyone interested in a particular aspect.

There is no doubt that this response is already clinically useful. Only a brief note is made of stimuli that involve no change in illumination, but it is likely that this technique offers far more possibilities, so much so that it will replace the crude flashing method. As yet the test is available in a few centres only and even here its clinical use can hardly be said to be established. If anyone wishes to shop around for equipment to set up a unit, there is an appendix with the names and addresses of suitable suppliers, but almost all are in the United States.


It is estimated that, of the 40,000,000 schoolchildren in the United States, a quarter have or will have some visual defect. This slim volume may seem in size a feeble attempt to approach this problem, but it is an excellent and rewarding book. It is not written for the ophthalmologist but there can be no ophthalmologist who would not benefit by reading it. It is addressed to everyone who is interested in children and is full of sound practical advice concerning many aspects of paediatric ocular care. The methods of assessing vision in children and the role of various specialties in its protection are discussed, and the management of the child with poor vision is reviewed. Great stress is laid on the prevention of childhood accidents and a clear guide to first aid is given. There is a somewhat redundant glossary, but this in no way detracts from this valuable work.