Book reviews


Rational diagnosis and therapy require a knowledge of pathology, but not so much of the minutiae of histological diagnosis as of the aetiology and mechanisms involved, wherein morphology is related to behaviour. In providing a text on ocular pathology for clinical ophthalmologists, this should be the guiding principle, for pathology is concerned as much with function as it is with description, and relates as much to disease processes observed in the ward and in the clinic as it does to pickled specimens in a museum.

Judged by this criterion, the second edition of Dr. Greer’s textbook is reasonably successful. It would, however, have gained from an inclusion of some of the more important contributions to ocular pathology in recent years, that have come from electron microscopy, histochemistry, and immunology. Some parts of the book are much better than others, the revised chapter on melanotic lesions of the conjunctiva and lids being very well done, as is most of the section on intra-ocular inflammation. Other topics, such as the retinopathies, are dealt with in an often disappointing manner; diabetic retinopathy, for instance, is dismissed in little over half a page, while hypertensive retinopathy and papilloedema are not even mentioned. Illustrations are fewer than the subject matter demands and many of them are of inferior quality, while the choice of the sporadic references appears to have been somewhat capricious.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, which in part may reflect the prejudices of the reviewer, this is still one of the best introductions to ocular pathology and the student who assimilates its contents will be more than prepared to meet his examiners.


This book is written in the conventional format with an introductory section on the anatomy of the visual pathways, a review of methods of visual field testing, and finally a description of visual field changes in various conditions. The section on methods includes a chapter on static perimetry. The result is a comprehensive review with a commendably brief text interspersed with numerous unpretentious line drawings. It will, as the authors claim, be a useful introduction to the subject for ophthalmologists, physicians, technicians, and research workers.

There has been a volte face since the first edition was published; the authors now state that a technician should relieve the ophthalmologist of the burden of routine examination of the visual fields. On the other hand they recommend that the ophthalmologist should personally check doubtful cases. It is not readily apparent why the occasional perimetrist should be more reliable than the skilled technician. Testing a visual field requires both broad clinical knowledge and adequate doctor-patient rapport but, if the tendency evident in this preface progresses, the ophthalmologist may one day be presented with a visual field as now he is presented with a radiograph, complete with diagnosis.


In this second edition the text has been slightly enlarged and brought up-to-date and the illustrations have been improved. This book can be confidently recommended to general practitioners and medical students.