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NEWSLETTER
OF THE
OPTOMETRIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Election:

Our by-laws state "Election to membership on the Executive Board shall be preceded by the nomination of each candidate by at least three members and the willingness of each nominee to have his name placed on the ballot."

Due to my absence during the second half of 1970, the election of a successor to Mrs. Maria Dablemont was negligently overlooked, but as no one seemed to notice this oversight we persuaded her to stay on the job. The board member whose term expires this year, Dec. 31, 1971, is Arthur E. Hoare. So, to bring our legitimacy back on schedule I now appeal for nominations for the replacement or continuation of both for five year terms.

Election ballots will go out with the October issue of the NEWSLETTER.

Wild-goose Chases:

O.H.S. Member James P. Leeds writes,

"The main reason for this letter is that I just read Vol. 2, No. 2 of the Newsletter of the O.H.S. It reminded me of an amusing experience I had within the past year, and I wanted to share it with you. As you know, my main interest as a sideline is the collection of old eye books. I get a lot of pleasure from my collection of (now) some 1,600 volumes and am constantly trying to add to it.

"Thus it was with no little interest that when I was looking thru an advertisement from Marboro Books in New York, a remainder house (that several years ago had INDUSTRIAL VISION by one H. W. Hofstetter for \$2.98--no comment), I saw listed ANTIQUE LOOKING GLASSES AND FRAMES, ENGLAND, 1700-1800. I chortled with glee and quickly sent in my money and just as quickly received a beautiful volume describing all the wall mirrors in the castles, palaces, and manors in England--which interested me not at all. Fortunately, Marboro Books has a money back guarantee, which they honored, so I swallowed my mortification and returned it.

"Such are the trials and tribulations of an old book collector."

Thanks, Jim, for this amusing disappointment. I am reminded of two similar experiences of my own. One was a patient search for, and interlibrary loan of, an inadequately referenced Ph.D. thesis on

"The Design of 17th Century French Spectacles", or similar title, which turned out to be a theatrical arts study of the design of pageants or exhibits which, in today's vernacular, we are more inclined to call "spectaculars."

The other was a report on "Color Discrimination Among Tribal Africans," or similar title, equally hard to find and obtain. It was a sociological study of racial prejudices based on skin color!

In fact, and this is the other side of the coin, my aforementioned book, INDUSTRIAL VISION, was purchased by a number of hopeful business entrepreneurs who thought it must deal with ways to succeed in industry!

Beginning with the Ebers Papyrus!

A history of orthoptic techniques, a book of almost 300 pages entitled STRABISMUS by M. J. Revell, is in press for publication this year by Barrie & Jenkins Limited, 2 Clement's Inn, London, W. C. 2. The material was originally written as a dissertation for the Higher Diploma of the British Optical Association. The page proofs, which I had the privilege of seeing, include 163 illustrations.

Kaleidoscope:

Though Sir David Brewster invented the kaleidoscope and displayed it to his colleagues of the Royal Society of Edinburgh his decision to patent it was a bit late. One of his optician friends to whom he had shown the toy earlier had beat him to it. D. J. Lovell tells about it in an article entitled "The Kaleidoscope" in Optical Spectra, Vol. 4, No. 3, March, 1970, pp. 90-91.

About von Graefe:

Four 100th year memorial lectures on Albrecht von Graefe, his personality, his times, and his contributions to our knowledge of glaucoma, strabismus, and the visual fields are published in Albrecht von Graefe's Archiv für Klinische und Experimentelle Ophthalmologie, vol. 181, no. 2, 1971, pp. 79-129.

Summaries are in English.

From Arthur Hoare:

"Herewith my belated dues--I wish you to feel free to promote some other member to the position of Trustee in my stead. I am very greatly honored, but content to move over for a man who deserves this honor more and who is younger."

My response: "Arthur, we shall continue looking for such a man, but I am not optimistic that we shall find him!"

Dr. Hoare enclosed a delightful clipping from the March 1971 issue of TODAY'S HEALTH, page 71, entitled "Shakespeare--With an Eye to Ophthalmology." The article identifies Chicago ophthalmologist

Dr. Theodore N. Zekman as a Shakespeare buff. Also quoted are some convincing phrases showing the bard's skill as an observer of the "physiology and psychology of the eyes."

Lest I run out of entries for the NEWSLETTER, Dr. Hoare also supplied me with a number of paragraphs taken from C. S. Flick's book, "A Gross of Green Spectacles." The following paragraphs, credited to Oliver Goldsmith in "The Vicar of Wakefield," suggests where Mr. Flick obtained the intriguing title for his book.

"'Ay, Moses', cried my wife, 'but where is the horse?'"

"'I have sold him', cried Moses, 'for three pounds five shillings and two pence. . . but I have brought back no money. I have laid it out in a bargain. . . here it is. . . a gross of green spectacles with silver rims and shagreen cases.'"

Philadelphia and the McAllisters:

O.H.S. member Maxwell Miller has written a magnificent account of optometric entrepreneurship during the early years of the U. S. A. The article appeared in the March 1971 issue of the American Journal of Optometry and Archives of American Academy of Optometry, Vol. 48, No. 3, pp. 270-280 under the title "The Philadelphia Story of Optometry." Featured in splendid detail is the role of John McAllister and the "veritable dynasty of optometrists" which he "sired."

How the XXth Century Began:

At the 1901 convention of the American Association of Opticians (now the A.O.A.) in Chicago, President A. Jay Cross (The Optical Journal, Vol. 8, No. 9, Sept. 1901, pp. 849-852) had this to say:

"Although our calling is many centuries old, it is probably safe to say that we have made greater advancement, in this country at least, during the past decade or two than has been made in any previous period of our history, no matter what its length."

The following were included in his address, too:

". . . I believe that our profession will be benefited by inducing the younger and brighter men to enter it. . . . the demand for high-class opticians vastly outnumbers the supply."

Noteworthy:

"Flaxseeds in Ophthalmic Folk Medicine," by Wm. Humphrey, M.D., in the American Journal of Ophthalmology, Vol. 70, No. 2, August 1970, pp. 289-290.

Op-art and El Greco:

In a new periodical Univis Digest, Vol. 1, No. 2 (undated, but received in June, 1971), again appears the question, "Was El Greco

astigmatic?" The three paragraph commentary apparently quotes, or perhaps paraphrases, the April 1971 issue of Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Monthly p. 66, review of a book by eye-surgeon Patrick Trevor-Roper entitled THE WORLD THROUGH BLUNTED SIGHT, published by Bobbs-Merrill Co.

Former Home of B.O.A. in U.S.A.:

In an all too brief conversation with O.H.S. honorary member J. Margaret Mitchell I learned recently that the British Optical Association was housed in Clifford's Inn Hall, Fleet Street, London, from about 1918 to 1935, at the end of which period the venerable old building was purchased by an American (Ford?) and brought to the U.S.A. (Dearborn Village?) My parenthetical queries are based on Miss Mitchell's recollection that the building was taken to Detroit, or near there.

Incidentally, Miss Mitchell is now technically retired, but she works on and on in the B.O.A. Library and Museum. Her current successor on the salaried job is Mrs. Sinclair.

Whoops!

Though we sent out news releases to the optometric press back in May of 1970 announcing the election of Miss J. Margaret Mitchell to Honorary Membership in the Optometric Historical Society, this fact was not recorded in our own Newsletter! The honor recognized her many years of service as the librarian of the British Optical Association and as editor of The Ophthalmic Optician. The Executive Board of the O.H.S. credits her as responsible for what is probably "the finest historical collection of optometricana in the world."

Her address is that of the B.O.A., 65 Brook St. W. 1, London, England.

Tannebaum Contributes:

In addition to contributing frequent historical notes to the Journal of the American Optometric Association, O.H.S. Member and Trustee Sol Tannebaum also gives optometric history a plug in the Journal of the Illinois Optometric Association, of which he is the editor, "A Proud Walk Through Optometric History" appeared in the May-June, 1970, issue, pp. 19-21.

Since September he has been teaching at the Illinois College of Optometry with a view to establishing a stronger optometry-history section to the department of history-science. He invites suggestions.

Malingering Lenses:

"An eighteen year old . . . girl was collecting insurance every week for about seven weeks because of 'blindness,' and her local physicians were filling out the insurance claim blanks. The agent finally brought her to me. After much struggling I found the first type of 'contact lens' I ever saw. She would cut out small pieces of oiled paper used around cigarette packs, and slip them under the lids giving the cornea a dirty-white appearance."

This is excerpted from a delightful little book entitled WE USED WHAT WE HAD, by Harvey B. Searcy, M.D., an ophthalmologist born in 1884 who practiced in Alabama most of the years of our century. The book was published by Colonial Press, Northport, Alabama, in 1962 at \$2.00, but it is out of print and unavailable in all of the used-book stores I have tried. I received my personal, widely circulated, well-worn copy from a retired engineer who is on my current "pen-pal" list.

Helmholtz and Optometric Heritage:

Steven O. Davis, a third-year student in optometry at the University of Waterloo, published a paper entitled "Hermann von Helmholtz: His Contributions to the Optometric Profession" in the Canadian Journal of Optometry, Vol. 32, No. 3, December 1970, pp. 90-96.

Particularly gratifying to me was the fact that three students in my own Orientation course called my attention to this article.

Vision of Presidents:

Protruding from my file the other day was a folder labeled Paul W. Kearney which contained some 1960 correspondence and a manuscript prepared under the caption of EYEGLASSES OF THE PRESIDENTS. Mr. Kearney, a free-lance writer, had written this on the assumption that, in any period, the President can afford the best, and hence the apparent ophthalmic trends identified with the presidents would provide a kind of reference standard. I do not know that his article ever got published, but it contains some interesting bits of information.

I doubt that it would be cricket for me to quote at length from the article without Mr. Kearney's permission, but I am sure he would not object to my mentioning the names of the presidents whom he included in his commentary, as follows: Washington, John Adams, Eisenhower, Truman, Hayes, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Wilson, Coolidge, Madison, Jackson, Jefferson, Taylor, Buchanan, Lincoln, Lyndon Johnson, Andrew Johnson, Grant, Harding, Garfield, Arthur, Harrison, McKinley, Taft, and Kennedy. He also included a comment on then Vice-President Nixon's glasses.

This manuscript will remain in my file indefinitely. If anyone wants this information in detail I shall, of course, try to contact Mr. Kearney for permission to release it.

Cho Tso, The Chinese Opticians' Tso-Sze?

Further correspondence from O.H.S. member T. C. Chang, Ritz Building, 7th Floor, 929 King's Road, Hong Kong, dated March 31 reads as follows:

Dear Hank,

"Very glad to hear from you at Bloomington, and thank you so much for the most interesting and valuable reference papers you sent me about the so-called 'CHO TSO'.

"It seems that Rasmussen is the first author who wrote about Cho Tso. I read perchance some excerpts from Needham's book wherein a very brief mention was made of Cho Tso as the inventor of spectacles in China. If I remember correctly, it was in the chapter about Chinese medicine. Anyway, Needham's reference to Cho Tso was so brief that it doesn't warrant our further discussion of the topic.

"I had tried hard to look for Cho Tso as an historical man - but of no avail. I am therefore inclined to believe that he is just a legendary man, non-existent in regular history.

"The other day, I had a talk with Mr. Woo about this problem. Mr. Woo came from Soochow. For centuries Soochow was the center of Chinese optical 'industry'. It was not until modern methods of refraction and grinding was introduced into China that this center was shifted to Shanghai. Even now, Soochow opticians are still the best in all China. Both Mr. Woo of Hong Kong Optical, and Mr. Fong of Chinese Optical, are Soochowese.

"In Soochow, the opticians were concentrated along a lane known as Tsuan-Tsu Hong. Behind it is situated Chow Wong Miao (Emperor Chow's Temple). Emperor Chow was believed to be the Tso-Sze (Initial Master) of Spectacle-lens-grinders and Jade-grinders. Every year on the 13th day of the Ninth Moon, the opticians of Soochow held a Festival to celebrate the birthday of their Tso-Sze. On this occasion a Dragon Boat was taken out from the Temple to show the tradesmen that their Tso-Sze had sailed to distant countries aboard a junk like this. Nobody knows now whether it was meant that Emperor Chow, as the Initial Master of spectacle-makers, brought back the technique of opticianry from foreign countries.

"In fact the title Emperor Chow is incongruous to his another title Tso-Sze, because one couldn't possibly be an emperor and a master-technician at the same time. It was possible only during the pre-historic times. For instance, an emperor was also the Initial Herbalist-Doctor. But that's mythology, not history.

"Unfortunately, I can't read Rasmussen's article in French. It appears that he, too, mentioned Cho Tso only as a mythological man. The illustration on Page 519 with Chinese inscription inside a spectacle case is of particular interest to me. The characters are hardly legible. Roughly, it says that the shop was situated in Soochow inside Chong-Meng Gate, featuring glasses made of crystal lenses elaborately ground surpassing in quality those made by other opticians.

"In old China, every trade had a Tso-Sze. The tradesmen worshipped their Tso-Sze, and every year on the birthday of their Tso-Sze, they held a festival to celebrate it. Even now in Hongkong, some of the trade guilds still hold yearly dinner to celebrate the birthday of their respective Tso-Sze.

"I still hope that before long I can get a French-speaking friend to read Rasmussen's article to me."

* * * *

H. W. Hofstetter, Editor