events it was all due to a woman, Mrs Aida Breckinridge was one of those typically American women—handsome, intelligent, and immensely determined. Fortunately for Johns Hopkins she developed glaucoma; more fortunately her surgeon was Wilmer; most fortunately the operation was a success. She considered that Wilmer deserved a better milieu than was afforded by the Episcopal Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital in Washington, although he had the largest and most distinguished private practice in America. Mrs Breckinridge’s views can clearly be understood for Wilmer was the handsomest man the reviewer has seen and one of the most charming and, with all, an excellent ophthalmologist and surgeon. So with the utmost zeal and determination, with the help of the Rockefeller Foundation and Johns Hopkins Hospital, she collected $3,700,000 and the Wilmer Institute was born.

This book divides the history of the first 50 years of the Wilmer Institute into three eras, the periods of its three directors and professors: The Wilmer era 1925–34, the Woods era 1934–55, and the Maumenee era 1955–75. At first the Institute took over a somewhat rundown building in the hospital complex until a new building was completed in 1929, and before Wilmer retired subdepartments of pathology, physiology, bacteriology, chemistry, and physiological optics had been established and the Institute had become recognized as one of the leading centres in ophthalmology. Woods’s directorship saw further growth and expansion and a great enhancement of its reputation, partly due to the unique achievements in research of Alan Woods himself and the amazingly comprehensive original and classical work of Jonas Friedenwald. When on the retirement of Woods, Edward Maumenee, an old Johns Hopkins student, was enticed from the chair at Stanford University to return to the Institute its work and influence steadily increased, despite the premature and lamented death of Friedenwald. During his tenure, in 1964, the Woods Research Building and the Friedenwald Library greatly increased the capacity of the institution together with the renovation of the whole building.

This book gives these events in a fascinating and detailed way. It tells how ophthalmology evolved during those 50 years, the changes in cataract and retinal and vitreous surgery, the rise and decline of Woods’s belief that tuberculosis was the cause of uveitis and in its treatment by the use of ‘barrels of tuberculin’ and later of streptococcal vaccine, and the host of medical and technological advances that have characterized these years, particularly in Maumenee’s time.

The book has also great personal interest. There are full biographies of the three directors, of Jonas Friedenwald, Frank Walsh, Charles Iliff, Louis Sloan—and the artist, Annette Burgess. Not the least feature of interest is the record, with photographs, of the house-staffs during these years; it is extraordinary how many of them have disseminated into responsible posts all over the United States, and how different they look now compared with their appearance in their youth.

In this volume we almost have a history of American ophthalmology over half a century. For indeed the Wilmer Institute has been fortunate—in the ability of its directors, in the great mass of medical clinical material available to it in Johns Hopkins Hospital, and in the availability of superb laboratories for the basic sciences in the associated university.

STEWART DUKE-ELDER

Notes

The Page and William Black Postgraduate School of Medicine

New York, 22 January 1977

A postgraduate course on ‘Dyslexia: current developments’, co-sponsored by the New York State Branch of the Orton Society Inc. under the direction of Virginia Lubkin, MD, FACS, will be held at the Mount Sinai Medical Center.

Further information may be obtained from the Director, The Page and William Black Postgraduate School of Medicine, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Fifth Avenue and 100th Street, New York, NY 10029, USA.

Seventeenth Annual Instructional Course in Contact Lens Fitting

New Orleans, 17–19 February 1977

The Rudolph Ellender Medical Foundation (an AMA-approved course in continuing medical education) will be presenting its seventeenth annual instructional course. Special convention room rates will be offered by the Fairmont Hotel.

Further information may be obtained from Jos. A. Baldone, MD, President, Rudolph Ellender Medical Foundation Inc. Roof, Delta Towers, New Orleans, 70112, USA.