

**A CENTURY OF
INTERNATIONAL
OPHTHALMOLOGY
(1857-1957)**

Written at the request of
The International Council of Ophthalmology

by
SIR STEWART DUKE-ELDER

LONDON
HENRY KIMPTON

1958

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PREFACE

BECAUSE the first International Congress of Ophthalmology was held in Brussels a hundred years ago, a centenary meeting is being held once more in the capital city of its birth. The occasion of this eighteenth congress is therefore a suitable time to recall the story of the international life of ophthalmology as expressed in the history of the International Congresses, the International Council, and the Federation of Ophthalmological Societies. It is a story full of interest in which is mirrored many of the dramatic advances in the specialty; at the same time sad, in that the projected sequence of its four-yearly meetings has been so frequently disturbed by wars and political unrest that at this centenary the eighteenth instead of the twenty-sixth congress is taking place.

A summary of the history of the first seventy-two years of the International Congresses has already been written by Treacher Collins who, in his life, served international ophthalmology more faithfully than any other, and was published in the second edition of the *Indicia* in 1933. The story of the first twenty-five years of the International Council was shortly told by Nordenson in the fourth edition of the *Index Ophthalmologicus* in 1954. The present history recounts the story of international ophthalmology in all its aspects more fully and brings it up to the end of the first hundred years. Such a history, of course, cannot be exhaustive nor can it record each incident; but it can convey the general trend of the efforts of our forefathers to establish and preserve co-operation between the nations in the interests of ophthalmology; it can reflect the exciting highlights in the progressive advance of our subject; and it may inspire future generations to emulate the spiritual and practical endeavours of those who have preceded them in maintaining the unity and brotherhood of ophthalmologists throughout the world.

STEWART DUKE-ELDER.

Institute of Ophthalmology,
University of London.

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A Century of
International Ophthalmology
(1857-1957)



EVARISTE WARLOMONT

(1820-1891)

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PART I

THE INTERNATIONAL OPHTHALMOLOGICAL CONGRESSES

THE earliest records of medicine known to man, derived from the ancient river cultures of Mesopotamia, show that even at a period of some 3000 years B.C. ophthalmology was a specialty in its own right.* Not only is the specialty one of the oldest, if not the oldest in medicine, tracing its origins beyond the mists of historical time, but within the memory of man it can with reason be said that it forms the most friendly and closely knit world-family in medicine. To a large extent this has been due to its extreme fortune in attracting a number of outstanding men, who not only attained international fame in their professional work, but also combined personal qualities of unusual distinction with a broad international outlook. Such a sequence is exemplified in Warlomont, Donders, von Graefe, Treacher Collins, van der Hoeve, and Nordenson, who together have been largely responsible for maintaining the continuity and vitality of international ophthalmology for a century despite all vicissitudes. For these reasons, it is not surprising that the oldest international medical congress which survives today is the International Congress of Ophthalmology, the first meeting of which took place in 1857. It is true that in 1852 there was a *Conférence Sanitaire Internationale* in Paris, and in 1853 a *Congrès Aliéniste Internationale*; but these were incidental and transitory. The ophthalmologists of the world first had the vision to form themselves into one large family, to realize the importance and the advantages and the great joy

* The Hammurabian Code, found in Susa (Shûsh) by J. de Morgan in 1902, is a systematization of Sumerian Laws dating to about 3000 B.C.; among other things, it ensured that the ophthalmic surgeon did not demand a fee greater than ten shekels of silver for a successful operation and was penalized by having his hands cut off for an unsuccessful one.

of getting to know each other well; moreover, they had the determination to maintain these close relationships so that the International Congresses of Ophthalmology, despite their age, still have all the vigour and enthusiasm of youth.



SALOMON LOUIS FALLOT
(1783-1873)

The First Congress: Brussels, 1857

The middle of last century was a suitable time for the inauguration of an international meeting. At that time the whole of medicine was undergoing a change so fundamental as to amount to a revolution; the new doctrines of Charles Darwin in biology, Claude Bernard and Carl Ludwig in experimental physiology, Rudolf Virchow in cellular pathology, Louis Pasteur in bacteriology, Richard Bright and Thomas Addison in clinical medicine, Joseph Lister in surgery, William Morton and James Simpson in anæsthesia—all these were combining to transform the face of medical science, replacing its medieval prejudices for the first time with a logical system based solidly on observation and experiment. In ophthalmology an international meeting was particularly opportune chiefly because of two circumstances which were exciting the attention of ophthalmologists of many countries. In the first place, the ophthalmoscope was demonstrated to the Physical Society of Berlin by Helmholtz on December 6th, 1850, and by allowing the exploration of the