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ON THE MUSCLES OF THE EYELIDS

THE MAKE-UP OF THE EYELIDS

Lower and upper eyelids (palpebrae inferiores, pp. superiores) are each formed by the membrane that takes its beginning from the membrane (pericranium) surrounding the skull; this membrane is a single body continuous with the adherent or white tunic of the eye (tunica conjunctiva bulbi) (η η in fig. 18, Ch. 14, Bk. VII); it is also formed by the skin together with its fleshy membrane (tunica conjunctiva palpebrarum). These are most firmly united at the ends of the eyelids and where the cartilage (tarsus) supporting the eyelashes is situated (fig. 1 [figure] in Ch. 35, Bk. I). So well are these four parts united – the skin, two membranes, and the cartilage that we called the tarsus – that they form the eyelid, a body of low density resembling no other part in the human body. Through the remaining area of the eyelids, the skin, so far as connection is concerned, is attached to the fleshy membrane as in nearly all other parts of the body; but instead of fat, only an oily humor lies between the skin and the membrane.

TWO MUSCLES OF THE EYELID

In the upper eyelid along its entire width, the fleshy membrane (septum orbitale) is abundantly equipped with muscular fibers, and makes as it were two muscles situated between the skin and the membrane which we said is continuous with the adherent or white tunic of the eye.

WHY IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE UPPER EYELID TO MOVE

It was necessary for the upper eyelid to be moved voluntarily; otherwise, it would be useless to us. Nature would have given us eyelids in vain if whenever something came to them from outside which would strike them and damage them (human eyes being far softer than those of beetles and crabs), we were unable voluntarily to close them. So it is that Nature produced two muscles with marvelous artistry; thin, broad, membranous, and of uniform substance nearly everywhere, placing one in the greater angle of the eye and the other in the lesser.

ONE MUSCLE

The one (ligamentum palpebrale mediale) (A, then C, b [above]; C in table 3) that occupies a portion of the greater angle begins from the middle of the angle at the side of the nose, also touching with its beginning the part of the eyebrow nearest the nose. Its wide ending, like the entire muscle, is implanted in the cartilage in which the lashes are set, occupying the entire half facing the greater angle.

1 Numbered Ch. 9 in the 1555 edition. See n. 1, Ch. 8 (1543 ed.) above.
2 1555 “and called the tarsus.”
3 The 1555 edition omits this sentence.
4 The tarsal glands, which are modified sebaceous glands, produce an oily hydrophobic secretion along the margins of the eyelids.
5 Either m. orbicularis oculi, pars palpebralis or m. orbicularis oculi, pars frontalisl; m. oculipalpebral, venter frontalis.
6 What follows recapitulates a long passage in Galen, De usu partium (3:799.16–407.3, May, 1968, pp. 484–488), opposing the view that motion of the eyelid is involuntary and explaining how the two muscles attached to opposite ends of the tarsus cause the eyelid to go up and down.
7 Vesalius deleted this comparison in his notes to his copy of the 1555 Fabrica.
8 Mirò quidam artificis, omitted from the 1555 version.
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