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OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURE AND TREATMENT OF PERNICIOUS ANEMIA.*

BY ALEXANDER MCPHEDRAN, M.B.,

Professor of Medicine and Clinical Medicine, University of Toronto.

MANY causes and conditions have been adduced to account for the occurrence of pernicious anemia, but none of them is satisfactory—nothing definite is known as to the actual cause. The unknown factor is generally believed to be a toxine; on this theory only can the phenomena be accounted for. Among the English-speaking profession generally the toxine is looked upon as of gastro-intestinal origin, and that it acts on the blood of the portal system especially, causing rapid hemolysis, and that the other effects produced are secondary, developing in the course of the disease. Many German physicians, on the other hand, attribute the disease to a toxine effecting hemogenesis, as shown by the abundance of myeloblasts in the bone marrow and in the blood, indicating a reversion to the embryonal type. It is probable that both views are in part correct; that not only blood destruction, but blood formation, has been affected by a common toxemia, resulting in the genesis of abnormal corpuscles and the rapid destruction of the less resistant ones. The blood formation is atypical, and therefore to be attributed to pathological irritation rather than to excessive physiological stimulation.

The other changes met with, especially those in the spinal cord and peripheral nerves, are probably produced by the action of the same irritant, rather than as the result of the protracted anemia.

*Read at the meeting of the Association of American Physicians, Washington, May, 1901.