

Selections.

A PLEA FOR CONSERVATIVE ORAL SURGERY, WITH PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS.*

By G. LENOX CURTIS, M.D., New York City.

There is, perhaps, no other department of surgical practice in which the general surgeon, trained in the medical schools alone, is so deficient as in oral surgery. He clings to the ways of the ancients, and makes no effort to improve his methods in oral and facial surgery. The fault is not so much his as it is that of the system under which he was educated. For, notwithstanding all that has been demonstrated by Profs. Garretson and Tomes, the medical colleges persist in declining to annex to their curricula the special line of work regarding the facial region which would seem to be of paramount importance, in view of the æsthetic factor involved.

The medical student of to-day receives no training in oral and facial surgery; so that the general surgeon may be excused for not practising that which he has not been taught. Even our modern text-books contain many of the identical illustrations and much of the advice upon this topic which were published in the "forties." The surgeon trained under such auspices must, in order to advance in oral surgery, create, by his own observation and skill, better methods. To such a one, the Langenbeck operation, the opening through the face for the resection of the jaw, for the removal of tumors and necrosis, trephining below the eye to gain access to the antrum of Highmore, the resection of nerves by cutting through the face, may seem justifiable. But to the man who has seen such operations performed through the oral cavity, so that no visible external scar is left, such practice seems like butchery, and the practitioner who still persists in the old way is almost guilty of malpractice.

That the condition of oral surgery as practised by the average general surgeon is entirely because of the lack of better teaching in the schools, and that he will accept better methods when their value is demonstrated to him, is evidenced by personal experience. Just prior to the writer's appointment on the staff of the New York Post-Graduate Medical School, every general surgeon of the faculty who had a vote cast it against him, and he was informed that it was because they did not wish to see this

* Read before the Atlanta Meeting of the American Medical Association.