

The active, progressive inflammation, such as the above, which works rapidly and produces definite results, is a clear-cut fact; but the inflammations that act by the effect of weak irritants, (it may even be, by failure of the cell to rid itself of its products of metabolism) which require months or years to accomplish, are so gradual, that they are often scarcely discernible. We call them degenerations, and to many the term degeneration implies a hazy, indefinite condition, hardly health and hardly disease, but whatever it be, not an inflammation. Yet it is an inflammation. We must recognize that the "degenerations" of the heart are inflammations, brought about by weak irritants acting through long courses of time. The histological picture of such a degeneration is the same, in every particular, as the picture of an inflammation. Does disease bring the cell by two different routes, to the same end? It is hardly to be supposed.

Summarized, the facts are these:—

1. Inflammation is a definite series of events, occurring in a definite order; the events may require widely different periods of time, and one event may be more prominent than another, but the uniformity of the process can be depended upon.

2. The ability to classify and recognize any given case of inflammation depends upon a clear knowledge of this sequence of events, which is found described in the introductory part of every text-book, and, in default of a better way, must be slavishly learned therefrom.

3. There is scarcely a limit to the weakness of an irritant, or to the length of time through which an irritant may act; however, slow the process, the various events in the sequence are present, in their definite order, and the process, though called by the indefinite term "degeneration," is, in kind, an inflammation.