

of an accumulation in a lobule of the thyroid, the accumulation being associated with some destruction of gland tissue; not all the gland tissue of the lobule has been destroyed; some is left, and it is this that forms the characteristic irregular coating of the internal wall of the cyst. In support of this opinion is the fact that the large masses frequently found projecting into the cysts most commonly spring from the inner or medial aspect of the cyst, from the region where the lobules are not sharply cut off the one from the other.

It must be remembered that the thyroid is an imperfectly lobulated organ; toward the periphery the gland substance is seen to be partitioned off by fibrous septa, running in somewhat irregularly from the surface. These septa, however, become broken up and indefinite in the more central and deeper areas of the organ. But, apart from the character of the lobulation of the gland, it is to be noticed that in any case of accumulation of fluid in the interstices of the thyroid the tendency would evidently obtain for destruction and rupture of the tissue to occur in an outward direction—in the direction of least resistance. Thus, any advancing destruction of thyroid tissue would be most marked toward the exterior.

If this be so, and if these cysts be due primarily to destruction of thyroid tissue and accumulation of fluid in a space bordered by destroyed or partially destroyed vesicles, what is the cause at work leading to such destruction?

According to Wölfler, the main cause is an oversecretion of colloid in the vesicles, with consequent rupture of these, infiltration of the interstitial substance with colloid material, atrophy of the infiltrated tissue, and subsequent continued excretion of colloid from such of the epithelial cells of the ruptured vesicles as remain undestroyed. He devotes two pages to a consideration of the successive steps in such a process.*

So far as I have been able to determine, this view has been generally accepted, and no other explanation has been brought forward by more recent workers to explain the development of these cysts.

* Wölfler, Ueber die Entwicklung und den Bau des Kropfes, Berlin, 1883, p. 192.