Editorial Notes

A NEW THEORY OF THE CAUSE OF ENTEROSTASIS

Intestinal stasis has been much before the medical profession and the public during recent years, owing largely to the very active propagation of his views by Sir Arbuthnot Lane and his followers. Both in Great Britain and in this country, however, a large number of medical practitioners have dissented from Lane's theory of the cause of intestinal stasis, some partly and others wholly, and the question has been made one for vehement discussion. A new view of intestinal stasis has been lately put forward by Dr. Arthur Keith, Conservator of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, England, who took as his subject for the Cavendish lecture which he delivered this year a new theory of the causation of what he terms enterostasis (*West London Medical Journal*, July, 1915).

In this lecture Keith first pointed out the extent to which our knowledge of the living human body had been revolutionized by the discovery and application of the Roentgen rays. He found that an account published four years ago by L. R. Müller on the innervation of the bowel states definitely that the myenteric plexus differs from a true nerve plexus both in structure and in staining reaction. He therefore adopted the working hypothesis that the myenteric plexus represents a nodal and conducting system. He says that, if he is right in presuming that the myenteric plexus represents in the intestine a system which corresponds to the nodal and conducting system of the heart, then it is also to be expected that both systems should be developed in a corresponding manner. The other parts of the alimentary canal where peristaltic movements are known to arise were examined carefully without results, and then the various sphincteric regions of the alimentary tract were examined and the conclusion was reached that there was such a nodal center at the gastroesophageal junction of the mammalian stomach.

When Keith's search for a nodal system along the alimentary canal had reached an encouraging stage he visited Dr. W. B. Cannon in his laboratory at Harvard University, who told him that Alvarez had lately discovered that the commencement of the second part of the duodenum dominated the rhythm for the whole