

The Canada Lancet

VOL. XL.

JANUARY, 1907

No. 5.

ST. MARY'S CLINIC, ROCHESTER, MINN.

By ERNEST A. HALL, M.D., C.M., Vancouver, B.C.

ONE of the most interesting features of this clinic is the exhibition of living pathology in contradistinction to post-mortem demonstrations. Dr. Mayo states that while post-mortem findings may make an excellent foundation for the study of medicine, they make a poor superstructure, and rational surgical procedure cannot be deduced from what is seen in the dead-house. For instance, we were formerly told that tuberculosis of the kidney was almost universally double, because, when the disease had extended so far that the patient succumbed, both kidneys were involved. The records of St. Mary's Clinic show that in the early stages 85 per cent. are single, and therefore amenable to surgical treatment. Again, in the matter of the relationship of laceration of the cervix to carcinoma, if there is no examination nor report of the cases until they are dead from carcinoma, with the cervix and contiguous parts a mass of disintegration and the landmarks obliterated, how is the matter of the previous laceration and erosion to be determined in relation to causation? The same with carcinoma of the stomach. If these cases are not seen until the patients are dead from the disease, when all the area of ulcer induration has been involved in the cancerous mass, what basis can there be for any statement as to the early development; or any hypothesis as to ulcer being a contributing, predisposing or exciting cause of the malignant degeneration? With regard to the latter, the ante-mortem pathological reports have been more than interesting, showing that in 39 cases in which a portion of the stomach was removed, 79.5 per cent. showed good evidence that the cancer had developed upon an old ulcer base, and histories and pathological findings gave positive evidence in over half the cases. This method of determining the ante-mortem conditions which are revealed upon the operating table in the early stages of disease, is revolutionary, especially with regard to conditions of the stomach, duodenum and bile passages, the pathology of which must be rewritten. Many of the standard works upon the stomach are, according to the teachings of this clinic, as full of fairy tales as were the chapters upon cellulitis and inflammation of the bowels that were written thirty years ago.