

## CANCER OF THE RECTUM.\*

By EDMUND E. KING, M.D., TORONTO.

Surgeon St. Michael's Hospital, the Toronto General Hospital, Home for Incurables, the House of Providence.

Cancer of the rectum is a disease which starts insidiously, advances rapidly and surely, not necessarily giving rise to any startling or painful symptoms to call a patient's attention to a most serious malady before it has produced an almost incurable condition. Cancer of the rectum differs in no respect from cancer in general. The widespread ravages of cancer lead only to one goal if neglected, yet are amenable to treatment when recognized early enough. "When early enough" is most likely best defined by saying while it is yet a local disease. After it has spread into the lymphatics, and possibly been deposited in the liver or other distant parts, the chances of cure by operation are materially decreased, yet even comparatively extensive glandular enlargement should not deter us from an attempt at removal as completely as possible. That one can have cancerous disease without pain is in no part of the body more completely verified than in the rectum. That no disease is more distressingly painful during its ultimate course than cancer of the lower gut is equally true. If we can only educate our patients in general to take advice early for piles, if we can only impress upon ourselves the necessity of not neglecting to examine every case of rectal trouble, and not prescribe in a cursory manner for all diseases of the rectum, we will soon arrive at that point where cancer of the rectum will be recognized in the early, local, and curable stage. By a widespread cutting operation, removing all the diseased, and well into the healthy, tissue, it may be entirely cured up to a comparatively late period in its existence. The removal should be complete, yet there is no necessity to sacrifice normal tissue beyond a just sufficiency.

I believe the day is close by when we will not only advocate, but insist upon, the more radical operations being undertaken at a more early period than ever before. Statistics now show results far more favorable than formerly. An operation that may cure, and positively will render the remainder of the patient's life more comfortable is not only justifiable, but is, in my opinion, demanded.

Any operative interference other than that which tends to a complete removal of the growth is only palliative, and in no

---

\* Read before the Toronto Medical Society, 1900.