

ducts of the chemical processes of the system from which they are removed by the excretory organs. If it was found that if any failure existed by which the elimination of these alkaloids was arrested and they accumulated in the system, the organism would suffer. This is known as auto-toxis or auto-intoxication—the body poisoned by the chemical processes going on within it.

When we take into consideration the mental and physical pressure incident to the existing conditions of modern life, one can readily understand how easy it is to impair or destroy the functions of the secretory or excretory organs, and throw back into the system the poisonous products which should be expelled through the proper emunctories. The liver is the great protector of the body against auto-intoxication, and this antitoxic action is one of its chief functions; whilst the bile as it passes outwards through the intestines disinfects their contents. The liver acts as the sentinel and takes up poisons introduced with our foods, and also those produced by the action of micro-organisms, and transforms them into harmless bodies. Any interference with this action of the liver produces great mental and physical distress, melancholy, apathy, and an accumulation of products, the result of fermentative processes of intestinal origin.

The somatic origin of the various psychoses may now be regarded as a special study, and the fact is recognized that defective oxidation, or the absorption of products of intestinal fermentation, will serve to explain the clinical features of some of the types of insanities which occasionally come under the observation of the physician.

I might refer you to cases of puerperal insanity which appear sometimes weeks after confinement when it is supposed that all danger of septic absorption has vanished, to offer some other cause than local brain trouble, and which could be explained on the theory of the absorption of the products of intestinal decomposition. Again it has been observed that in some cases of strangulated hernia temporary insanity has occurred after the strangulation had been relieved, owing, it is believed, to the absorption by the bowels of putrescent materials spread all along the intestinal tract, which owing to a partial temporary paralysis, could not expel them. I have seen, after a fractured limb, where