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Original Articles

THE MODERN TREATMENT OF GASTRIC DISEASE *

BY HERBERT J. PATTERSON, M.A., M.C., M.B. (CANTAB),
F.R.C.S.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—

Will you allow me first of all to say how much I appreciate the honor conferred on me by the invitation of your President to come and address you. It is easy to accept such an invitation, but quite another matter to prepare an address worthy of such an audience as I know from experience one meets in this New World.

In the year 1876, Gussenbauer and Von Winiwarter, as the result of experiments on dogs, came to the conclusion "that the surfaces of the stomach have a real tendency towards union by first intention, just as have wounds of the skin." They little imagined what paths were opened up by this simple observation, which seems so obvious to us. Without exaggeration these pioneers may be described as the heralds of gastric surgery, which at that time was a closed book in the history of medicine.

Their work soon bore fruit. In the year 1881, Billroth performed the first pylorotomy on a human being, followed by recovery. This year, indeed, was a landmark in the progress of gastric surgery, for, in addition to Billroth's brilliant success, the operation of gastro-jejunostomy was performed for the first time by Wolfier, at the suggestion of Nicoladoni. It may be regarded as the birth year of the surgery of the stomach.

Since those early days, gastric surgery has been a child of rapid growth. It is, indeed, difficult to realize how great has been the progress, even within the short time compassed by my

* Delivered before the Academy of Medicine, Toronto, November 24th, 1913.