

## THE EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER.

Students of medicine and practitioners at large cannot hear too much upon the subject of Cancer, since much of the tragedy in professional life is bound up with the dreadful disorder. Within recent years there has been so much discussion upon the deeper parts of the subject, that the more obvious aspect has been neglected. The surgeons have been speculating upon the infectivity of the disease, and the influence of heredity. The pathologists have been searching for a specific parasite, one set affirming and another denying that it has been discovered. The therapeutists have been busy with an estimate of the influence of certain rays of light upon its growth; and we have heard too little upon the necessity of an early and exact diagnosis.

Dr. Armstrong has done well in recalling the mind to a consideration of the essential fact that cancer has a beginning; that it is primarily a local disease; that in many instances there is a pre-cancerous state; that it may be detected and that it may be removed. This is the message of his clinical lecture in the Montreal General Hospital, which is printed in this issue of the Journal for purposes of wider circulation. The lecture will recall the old days in that institution, when its great clinical teachers, Osler, Howard, Ross, Macdonnell, used to seize upon one theme, and, stripping it of all accessories, would present it in the simplicity of its truth. The lecturer made it clear that success in dealing with cancer rests primarily with the general practitioners. It is they who are first consulted about the trivial ulcer upon the tongue, about the hardly palpable "lump in the breast." Upon the early recognition of the nature of the condition depends its successful removal. The best which the records show is twenty-five per cent. of recoveries and seventy-five per cent. of failures. Dr. Armstrong's declaration that these figures might be reversed is none too optimistic, if physicians are alive to their responsibility.

The series of cases which was presented showed so perfectly the results of early, delayed and late diagnosis, that a profound impression must have been made upon the student mind. The early case proved that recognition is not difficult, if only care and industry be employed by the physician who is first consulted. The general practitioner cannot hold himself guiltless if he allows a commencing cancer to become inoperable.

In the issue of this JOURNAL for May we had occasion to mention the retirement of Dr. F. W. Campbell from Bishop's College, to give some account of his public service and an estimate of his character. At the same time we were obliged to chronicle the death of his only surviving son, his eldest son having died not a year previously. To-day we desire