

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

CHRONIC INTESTINAL STASIS.*

BY W. ARBUTHNOT LANE, M.S.

Surgeon to Guy's Hospital, London.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—I appreciate very much the honor you have done me in asking me to open this debate. I accepted the invitation very reluctantly, as I felt I had nothing particularly new to add and that my opinions on the subject had been already stated clearly on several occasions.

I undertook to do it, however, recognizing that while I would not detain you very long, I would afford an opportunity to many who have been devoting much time and attention to this subject of expressing their views and experience. I trust that the subsequent discussion will throw much light on the causation, symptoms, and treatment of chronic intestinal stasis and of the many diseases which result from it.

I employ the term "chronic intestinal stasis" to indicate such an abnormal delay in the passage of the intestinal contents through a portion or portions of the gastro-intestinal tract as results in the absorption into the circulation of a greater quantity of toxic or poisonous materials than can be treated effectually by the organs whose function it is to convert them into products as innocuous as possible to the tissues of the body.

When these poisons and their products of conversion exist in excess in the circulation they produce degenerative changes in every tissue and in every organ in the body. It is probable that the textures of those organs whose business it is to convert, carry and eliminate them suffer more than do the other tissues of the body, which are merely permeated by them. In proportion as the stasis is prolonged so under the influence of a progressive strain greater than they are able to bear these several organs undergo a degeneration which proceeds with increasing rapidity as the condition advances. What the organs are which convert and excrete these poisons, what share each takes in the process, and how any organ is affected in its physiology, is very difficult to define accurately, especially as far as the ductless glands are concerned. We believe that the liver is the most important converter of the poisons and that the kidneys and skin are the chief excretors of the products of conversion.

*Delivered before the Toronto Academy of Medicine, 5th November, 1912.