

PREVENTIVE SURGERY.

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When we consider the wonderful progress achieved by surgery within the last thirty years, we are apt to forget that the use of the scalpel is in a sense a confession of failure; cases of gastric ulcer, of pneumonia, of nephritis, come first under the care of the physicians, and not before medicine has tried its best and said its last word in vain, is surgery called to the rescue. Under the alarming and vague term "complications" the physician hides the fact that disease has gone beyond his reach.

Just as prevention is better than cure, so was medicine better than surgery. Yet the latter, with its history shorter than a man's life, its glamour of immediate results, its dramatic methods, seemed to attract the best brains of the day. And surgery now claims, as well as the power to cure, the advantage of forestalling disease.

TONSILLITIS.

More than any other operation, tonsilectomy seems to have justified these aims of preventive surgery.

The importance of the pathological conditions which may arise from a diseased state of tonsils cannot be too strongly emphasised, since by a simple and safe procedure we may be protected from these fateful consequences.

As is well known, the tonsils are composed of lymphatic tissue; they react to environment, as does such tissue elsewhere. Lymph glands are scattered throughout the body as a mechanism of defence; when germs gain a foothold in the organism they are carried to the nearest glands and then destroyed. If the germs are too numerous or powerful they set up suppuration in the glands; with a lesser degree of virulence they give rise to chronic inflammation: the enlarged gland becomes a septic focus, from which poisons are poured into the blood.

Now the tonsils, from their position within the mouth, which in a normal individual harbours countless germs, are more liable to attack than any other gland in the body. Their deleterious effect is then twofold: mechanical and toxic.

MECHANICAL EFFECT OF DISEASED TONSILS.

These are seen most frequently among children, and result from obstruction.

Obstruction to respiration so that the child breathes with his mouth open, his chest is undeveloped, the ribs and sternum sunken, the nose pinched, the lungs subject to recurrent bronchitis from the passage of cold and unmoistened air which has not come through the nasal chambers. The child also snores, and may have a constant discharge from his nose.

Obstruction to swallowing, so that then children suckle badly as infants, and later show a distaste for food.

Obstruction to the Eustachian tube, which opens a communication between the mouth and internal ear, a recurrent discharge from the ears and impaired hearing, or even deafness, being the ultimate result. Add to this mastoiditis, so fraught with danger.

Obstruction to the larynx from discharges set up in the throat by irritation of the mucous membrane: the resonance of the voice is impaired and pronunciation indistinct.

The child who suffers from enlarged tonsils presents indeed a typical appearance, and can be diagnosed at a glance when the condition is well marked. We have only mentioned the more obvious consequences of tonsillitis, but the child is also anæmic, is intellectually apathetic and dull, suffers from a lack of vitality, from enuresis, and not infrequently shows a curvature of his spine and develops flat feet.

TOXIC EFFECTS OF DISEASED TONSILS.

The evil results due to enlargement of the tonsils are only rivalled by their toxic action. One of the greatest authorities on this question has said that more people actually die from the consequences of tonsillitis than from a bad appendix.

Heart disease arising in childhood has its origin in septic tonsils; articular rheumatism claims a similar relationship; tuberculous glands in the neck can in most cases be traced to the same cause; appendicitis has been shown to have a close connection with tonsillitis. This is surprising only at first sight when we consider that the appendix, like the tonsils, contains a large proportion of lymphatic tissue.

Many little patients, suffering from abdominal symptoms which a few years ago would have led to an operation on their appendix, are now cured by simple removal of the tonsils.

The cramps, wrongly called "growing pains," are but a form of rheumatism, and are often caused by a focus of infection in the throat. Rheumatism in all its aspects is

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