

Professional Review.

APPENDICITIS.

We have received a copy of a pamphlet on the above subject, translated from the French of Professor Lefèvre by Mrs. Agnes S. Hunter. It is interesting to note that dealing with the function of the appendix the author says:—

“Anatomists have been struck with the glandular structure of the tissue of the appendix. This organ is not made to receive aliment, nor to absorb any soluble products. On the contrary, *it pours into the large intestine a liquid* which evidently contributes its part in the chemistry of digestion.

“The appendix is not then the useless organ of which the surgeon dreams of ridding humanity, and we may still put in the far future, this nightmare in which we see our babies submitted to the bistoury to have their tiny appendix resected.

“Moreover, is not this pretence of *correcting a forget of Nature* ridiculous and almost intolerable? Where else does Nature deserve a reproach? It is true, it is maintained, that the appendix is a herbivorous organ, and it seems a piece of astonishing wonder to find it in omnivorous man. But we forget that, in fact, man is no more omnivorous than carnivorous, or herbivorous.”

Those who have sat at the feet of Nature and studied her methods will be slow to believe that in the marvellous construction of the human body she has by some oversight included an organ which not only is useless, but a source of danger to its possessor. This is not the way in which she goes to work, and we prefer to believe that the appendix has its uses, and that if possible it should be left *in situ*, in order that it may perform its special functions.

But there is no doubt that at the present day inflammation of the appendix is alarmingly common, nor that under this condition it is often a source of danger, and its removal may become necessary. Is it within our power to take any precautions, so as to lessen the possibility of the occurrence of inflammation? Professor Lefèvre believes that there is. Hygiene has as yet not been consulted, and it is from her that the last word must come. “Hygiene rules the actions of life, and regulates the ways of living so as to balance the organic functions, and radiate the vital powers so as to maintain or attain the incomparable treasure of health. The secret of all rational and fruitful hygiene is to be found in a happy relationship to the outer world, in an agreeable union of matter and cosmic energy; in a word, it is in a harmonious exchange, or, as we say in physiology in a well-balanced metabolism. This harmonious nutrition is almost impossible with the habits and passions of humanity. The stomach and the intestine, victims of the tyrannies of fashion, or of worldly prejudices, receive materials, the least appropriate to their nature and activity. Are not modern menus prodigal over crabs, oysters, fish, fowls, red meat and game, generous wines, coffee and liqueurs, as if it were a problem how to choose the most heating materials which may breed most surely this gastric intestinal inflammation? Obstinate constipation is brought on, enlarging the cæcum more and more. Under this

pressure, the appendix orifice, begins to gape, ready to receive the foreign body, or the dried fragment of fecal matter, which with the inflammation will finish the disorganisation of the delicate part.

“These almost fatal consequences of a heating and stimulating nourishment have been magisterially exposed by Dr. Lucas Championnière, in a communication made to the Academy of Medicine of Paris, 19th of last February. Listen to the learned surgeon-chief at the Hospital of St. Louis:—

“From intestinal infections and chiefly under the influence of intestinal obstructions, the propagation of infection may reach the appendix, and there it becomes the origin of all the sharp attacks which are marked with such extreme violence. It is certain that in the towns in which we may observe this extraordinary increase of appendicitis, the dietary has been prodigiously altered. Flesh-food has become the chief nutriment. Plain meals and fasts have disappeared almost entirely from our habits. The consumption of flesh-meats assumes extraordinary proportions. It is very remarkable that the frequency of appendicitis is much greater in the countries where flesh-foods are even more general than with ourselves—in England and America. In the large cities of the United States appendicitis is so prevalent that one of the most eminent observers, Keen of Philadelphia, estimates that a *third* of the population is attacked by it.”

If we believe that the excessive use of flesh-foods predisposes to appendicitis, then we must own the danger in the habits of modern times. Take the menu of one day of a member of modern society and consider whether it is possible that the digestive system should perform all that is expected of it, and not only on one day, but day after day and week after week. There is the early cup of tea with etceteras at eight o'clock. Breakfast from ten to eleven, comprising several courses. Luncheon at two, of five or six courses, highly-seasoned and unwholesome, with wines of various sorts. At tea time there are savoury sandwiches, cakes hot and cold, marrons glacés, and sweets of various kinds, with whisky and soda for those who may prefer it. Dinner at nine is a lengthy meal of many courses comprising the dainties of the season, once more with wines, coffee, and liqueurs. After dinner dancing begins, and later there is supper with again champagne and other wines and spirits, the last “snack” being taken somewhere about 2 a.m., when for a few hours the tired, over-loaded digestive apparatus has a chance of rest. But who shall say that all this food is necessary or wholesome, or that it does not overload the colon and predispose, not only to indigestion, but also to constipation, enlargement of the cæcum, and pressure upon and consequent gaping of the appendix orifice?

Surely we as a nation have become over luxurious, over indulgent, with the result that Nature rebels, and in her own way, sharp and stern, points the lesson. If we would have sound health we must return to simple and frugal methods of life. And if we compare our daily menu with that of the abstemious Oriental races, whether in Japan, China, or India, whose powers of endurance are renowned, or with the two meals of rice a day upon which the native of tropical Africa cheerfully trudges mile after mile in the blazing sun with a fifty pound load on his head, we must surely realise that our present mode of living is open to criticism.

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