

SCIENCE

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THE METHOD OF GROWTH OF THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM¹

IN selecting a title connected with the general subject of the lymphatic system, I have chosen to emphasize the phase of the subject with which the anatomist of to-day is concerned. As a matter of fact, in studying the problem of growth he is seeking to understand the nature of the lymphatic capillary. This is no new problem, but rather it has dominated the study of the lymphatic system for nearly three hundred years. The colorless fluid of the tissues was called lymph long before lymphatics were discovered. It was thus natural that when vessels were discovered containing this fluid they were called lymphatics. As soon as the lacteals and then the general lymphatics were discovered, the question arose in regard to the nature of these vessels, what was their extent and how they ended in relation to the surrounding tissues. At first the lymphatics were thought to begin in wide mouths in the walls of the various cavities of the body, and then, as these openings proved difficult to find, attention became focused on the relation of the lymphatics to the tissues. The number of terms which have been used in seeking to analyze the relation of the lymphatics to the tissues—for example lymph radicles, lymph rootlets, lymph spaces, parenchymal spaces, tissue spaces—will serve to illustrate how persistent has been the quest of the anatomist to understand the lymphatic capillary. Stated in other terms, this is the time-honored question of open and closed lymphatics. In presenting to you the conception

¹ Address delivered to the Harvey Society of New York City on December 18, 1915.