

part of the ear. The time also corresponded with the commencement of the disease. He said that he had never suffered from neuralgia, but that the patches had at first itched a good deal. The hairs at the periphery of the patches were examined microscopically. Those on the very edge were characteristically atrophied, what Crocker has called exclamation mark (!) hairs. Others were examined from beyond the edge, where, to the naked eye, they seemed perfectly healthy. After sitting for some time in caustic potash, spores in large numbers were found at the base of some of the hairs where they had been torn off their papillæ in extracting them. These spores corresponded in shape, size, and general appearance with those found in ringworm. No mycelial threads could be demonstrated. The following treatment was instituted :

R Hydrarg. bi-chlor., grs. viii.
Spts. vini rect.
Spts. terebinth., āā oz. ii.
M.

S.—To be well rubbed into the patches, and for some distance around them, once a day.

R Hydrarg. bi-chlor., grs. xii.
Spts. vini rect. dil., oz. viii.
M.

To be used as a lotion for the entire scalp, face, and neck every evening. To be allowed to dry on.

The relative success of these measures on the different patches seemed to bear out the idea that the affection was parasitic, for the more recent and smaller patches recovered very quickly under it, while the oldest patch was stubborn, the hair returning after several months of constant attention, seeming to indicate that the parasite had got a firmer hold there.

It is only fair, however, to give the other side of the question. Alopecia areata is a disease which, in the vast majority of cases, gets well of itself, the denuded scalp becoming covered with strong, healthy hair, after perhaps several crops of downy hair have sprung up and fallen off again. Then the demonstration of the parasite is very uncertain, for although in the above case it was so clear that I was able to demonstrate it to the students of my class in the medical school, I have since exam-

ined a large number of hairs from a very considerable number of other patients without being able to make them out so clearly as to be able to assert unequivocally that they were present. And in any disease where only spores are present, and where we are unable to employ some special and efficient differential stain, the personal bias, and the desire to find what one is looking for must be brought severely to task before coming to any definite conclusion. I have been frequently amused on reading some article on the diagnosis of ringworm at the flippant remark that in any case of doubt the microscope will readily settle the question. And when such people make an examination they almost always find abundant spores to support their abundant faith. As Mephisto says, "Dann geht Ihr durch die sichere Pforte zum Tempel der Gewissheit ein." Finally, the good results which undoubtedly attend the use of antiseptics are attributed by those who believe in the neuropathic origin of the trouble to the irritation which they almost all cause.

The neural varieties are much rarer than the parasitic, and fortunately so, the prognosis being much worse. I myself have never run across any case either of Neumann's alopecia, or of alopecia traumatica, but the following case belongs, I think, to the universal variety. On August 5th, 1890, Mrs. —, aged 27, came to me for treatment. She was a strong, healthy woman of fair complexion, but on her father's side she came of a decidedly neurotic family. She herself had never had neuralgia, hysteria, nor other nervous trouble. Both she and her sister were childless; her husband had had two children by a former wife. Her father's brother's child was insane (religious delusion); her father's sister's child had frequently had epileptic attacks, and died in a "fit"; her own brother, then twenty-four years of age, was an epileptic, very delicate, and had an abnormally large head. He had a very luxuriant head of hair, which had to be cut short every month. None of her brothers had moustaches, and they all had a very spare amount of hair on the face. Her father was still alive, aged 54, and was only commencing to grow bald on the top of the head. He had a heavy moustache, and enjoyed good health. Her mother died of ovarian tumour.