

THE BACTERIOLOGY OF BALDNESS

Sabouraud's discovery that seborrhea is invariably associated with a specific microbe is a fact which is not only new to us, but which was probably scarcely suspected. That this microbe should not only be found in seborrhea but that it should also be found in alopecia areata adds to the surprise with which these announcements must be received.

M. Sabouraud tells us that if we scrape from the skin the oily exudation obtained by pressure from a part affected by seborrhea, and spread it on a cover-glass, after dissolving the fat by ether and coloring for five minutes in gentian violet, and then discolorizing by Gram's solution, alcohol and aniline oil, we can detect myriads of special microbe which is a very fine bacillus. This bacillus when young is punctiform and almost resembles a coccus. The bacillus is found in rounded masses in the upper third of the hair follicle. When to this bacillus of seborrhea are added other organisms, which is often the case, we get secondary affections of the hair follicles—various forms of acne. The same bacillus affects the sebaceous glands of the scalp, where it produces depilation or baldness. The hair of the affected follicle dies, and it is seen, when examined under the microscope, to be normal in its oldest part and atrophied in its youngest.

Anatomically the seborrhea bacillus leads to progressive hypertrophy of the sebaceous glands and an exudation of leucocytes around the papillae of the hair. After this condition is established the hair falls, and each new hair that takes the place of one that is lost is weaker and smaller than its predecessor. The hair papillae manufacture the hair in the ordinary fashion, but as soon as it is made the ringworm fungus destroys it.

In alopecia areata, however, the fall of the hair is caused by a suspension of the formative power of the hair papillae. The atrophied hairs of alopecia areata differ very slightly to the naked eye from those which are killed by seborrhea; the process is essentially identical. A patch of

alopecia areata is an acute local affection of seborrhea. This is proved by the fact that if a section is made through the skin affected by alopecia areata in an early stage, the hair follicles, without exception, are found to be infected by the micro bacillus of the seborrhea, while around the affected surfaces the scalp is healthy and the follicles are not affected. Sabouraud tells us he has obtained in the sheep, the guinea-pig, and the rabbit, characteristic patches of alopecia areata by using cultures of its microbe. The patch of alopecia areata is only an attack of acute circinated seborrhea, and inversely the bald only become bald by a diffused process of chronic alopecia areata.—British Medical Journal.

CLEANING OUT THE STOMACH

While cleaning out the inside of a man's stomach, Dr. Turck, by means of the Rontgen ray at the same time views the internal apartment where the instrument is at work. The internal work was the first of its kind made in full view of the operator.

The instrument, called a gyromele, is a flexible cable of spiral steel wire, on the end of which was a small sponge. The cable was enclosed in a rubber tube, and this, with the sponge, was swallowed by the patient. The latter, stripped to the waist, then stepped before the Rontgen light. The doctor put the fluoroscope to his eyes, and an attendant turned the handle of the gyromele. The cable revolved as fast or as slow as was desired, the sponge at the farther end proceeded to its work of scouring the inner walls of the patient's stomach, while the doctor, through the fluoroscope, viewed the work, locating the metallic cable by means of the rays. By pushing or pulling on the cable the various portions of the inner walls of the stomach were operated on, and the matter which was gathered in the sponge was then removed for microscopic examination. No discomfort was felt by the patient, though before the rays for over an hour.