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## PHARMACEUTICAL DEPARTMENT.

## Original Communications.

*Notes on Varicella.* By CASEY A. WOOD, C.M., M.D., Professor of Chemistry in the Medical Faculty of Bishop's University.

Read before the Medical Alumni Association of Bishop's University.

In attending some cases of chicken-pox about two years ago, it struck me as very strange that there should be any doubt thrown upon the specific and independent nature of that disease. I was unable to understand how any other affection attended by a vesicular eruption could be mistaken for it. It seemed to me also that a mild case of small-pox, and an unusually severe attack of varicella have but little in common. Since that time chance has placed under my care quite a number of chicken-pox cases, and I must now confess that sometimes the diagnosis is not easy, and I can readily imagine how the distinct and specific character of the eruptive disease may have been called in question.

The affection is almost invariably so mild that, although probably common enough in domestic practice, it is yet comparatively seldom seen by the physician, as he is not often called upon to treat it. Still it is obviously important that the medical man should be as thoroughly acquainted with mild diseases as with severe ones. To mistake a mild disease for a severe one, and to treat it accordingly—that is, to give it a great amount of attention—would, in the majority of instances, be productive of less disastrous results than to err on the other side, and treat as of no importance what seems

to be a mild affection, but which is in reality a very grave one. There is another reason, and a very weighty one, too, why varicella should be particularly studied. A certain class of medical men in this and other places have done, and are doing, all in their power to undermine the confidence which the public and the profession repose in vaccination. Not only is this admirable form of prophylactic treatment charged with introducing into the system a long list of diseases, but it is also denied that it can prevent or modify an attack of small-pox. It seems to me that when one is tempted into disbelief in the protective value of vaccination, because he has seen more than once an eruptive disease affect vaccinated persons, he should be first certain—absolutely certain—that the eruption is that of variola, not of varicella.

This, then, is my apology for bringing before you a few observations I have made on this really trifling disease.

The consideration of the diagnosis is what I desire more particularly to dwell upon, and in doing so, I wish to add my evidence in support of the independent character of the disease. In view of the wide difference of opinion held by authors on the subject of varicella, I may, perhaps, be allowed to refer to what I consider its symptoms.

Chicken-pox usually occurs in epidemics, but, apart from this, isolated cases are found which may, indeed, prove centres of limited contagion. It is probably through the breath and the exhalations from the skin that infection results. The question of the retention of the specific poison, in whatever form it may be, by fomites, is not,