

An acarus, if placed on a piece of coloured paper and breathed upon, will be seen to crawl along the surface. If it be placed in the flame of a candle, a faint explosion will be heard; this is owing to the soft, semi-fluid body of the acarus being enclosed in a hard, shell-like skin, which bursts under the pressure of the steam generated within; a piece of epidermis on the other hand, noislessly shrivels up. Scabies is most frequently met with amongst the poor, but is much commoner among the middle and upper classes than it is popularly supposed to be. It is more common with children than adults. It rarely attacks the face or scalp. Its only cause is contagion.

As to the manner in which the contagion of scabies operates, it was formerly supposed that the fluid contained in the vesicles, which appear on the hands and feet, was the source of contagion, but actual experiment has supplanted this theory. Several persons were inoculated with the fluid taken from the vesicles of scabies, and not one contracted itch, whereas a single acarus taken from a furrow was found to be always capable of communicating the disease. It has been thought by many that scabies is ordinarily communicated in this way; but I think it is more reasonable to suppose that it is caught from the ova of the acarus. As the female tunnels her way through the substance of the epidermis, she makes from time to time small air-openings to the surface; the ova that she lays can readily escape by these apertures, and, owing to their extreme minuteness and lightness, adhere readily to any soft substance with which they may be brought into contact, so that it is more probable that the disease is communicated in this way than by means of the female acarus, who rarely, if ever, leaves the tunnel.

*Treatment.*—If there be much inflammation, it is advisable to defer specific treatment for a day or two, and to have recourse, in the interim, to laxative and refrigerant medicines, and to emollient baths. The specific treatment should be commenced by a thorough soaping of the skin, from the neck downwards, followed by a warm-bath, after which the following ointment should be well rubbed in over every part of the body, excepting only the face and scalp:—℞. Potass. carb. ʒ ss. sulph. sublim. ʒ j., hydrarg. bisulph. gr. ij., ol. bergam. m. iv., adipis. ʒ j. This process should be repeated every fourth day, till it has been undergone three or four times. After the ointment has been applied, fresh linen should be put on, but the same linen should be worn next the skin day and night, till the next application. At the same time care should be taken to disinfect all the patient's clothing, by subjecting it to a temperature of 200° Fahr. This may be done by boiling the linens, and ironing out the other clothes.

—*Med. Mirror.*