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HERPES.*

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The frequency with which I have met with herpes zoster in its different forms during the past winter has led me to make the few remarks I have put together here, which have been suggested by the peculiar form that zoster takes, illustrating, as it does, though very obscurely, the functions of the nutrient nerves of the skin. I wish first to remark on the confusion of nomenclature that attends the description of herpes. Some medical authors indeed describe herpes labialis and progenitalis and zoster as different diseases, but the majority class all together, and speak of herpes labialis, lumbo-femoralis, brachialis, etc., as though they were varieties differing merely in their seat. There are, it has always appeared to me, two distinct affections that receive the name of herpes, differing from each other in their locality, their mode of onset, their general symptoms, and probably in their pathology and cause, and resembling each other only in the fact of their being both vesicular. As to locality, the first always appears in the neighborhood of the mucous membranes of the openings of the body, more especially the mouth and nose, into which it not infrequently extends; the second manifests itself along the tract of one or more nerves in different parts of the body, almost any of the cutaneous nerves

being liable to be the subject of it, though some are more frequently attacked than others. As to mode of onset, herpes labialis is nearly always symptomatic of and accompanying some general constitutional disturbance, as catarrhal attacks, pneumonia, fevers, etc., and is not attended with pain, or at most a little pricking and uneasiness; while herpes zoster occurs independently of any other affection, the whole train of symptoms present being manifestly connected with the disease itself; pain preceding and during the outbreak being an especially marked symptom. Feverishness, coated tongue, and general indisposition, which are usually present, are evidently associated with the outbreak as a result, and not as a cause. Concerning herpes labialis, I do not intend to speak. It is a trivial affection, unattended, as a rule, with any uneasiness, beyond the discomfort that the eruption round the mouth occasions, lasting but a few days, and disappearing without leaving any trace of its presence, and, as a rule, requiring no treatment beyond some mild protecting application. The other kindred affection, zoster, is much severer, and deserves, I think, more attention than it has yet received, especially from pathologists, for there is no other affection that presents so clearly the relation of changes in the nutrition of the skin with disease of certain nerves. We see injury and disease of some nerve centres followed by paralysis, muscular atrophy, and disturbances of various functions. We also see many different forms of eruption of the skin, either local or general, but are, as a rule, unable

*Read before the Ontario Medical Association.