

Herpes is by no means rare; indeed, *acute herpes* ("zoster") is a frequent neurosis. Its form, however, is not always the same. In some eruptions of zoster the liquid exudation does not suffice for the formation of vesicles; in others the vesicles are very large, like those of pemphigus. These two varieties of dermatitis will sometimes resemble each other in many points. Mosler's case of cutaneous pemphigus began with small vesicles; within four or six hours they were of the size of pigeon's eggs. In one of my cases the pemphigus eruption was surrounded with a hyperæmic area, and that of Kopp's is of a similar nature. These instances prove the at least occasional presence of equal etiological and pathological conditions. Still, the great scarcity of pemphigus of the mucous membrane of the mouth appeared to be a sufficient reason both to describe my cases and to range them under a special heading. The neurotic character of my cases appeared to be self-evident. In two there is a positive family taint; in one the taint is but individual, but the neurosis finds its cause, amongst others, in masturbation, and exhibits a series of nerve anomalies. Even gastric symptoms, when they occurred in my cases, were easily recognized as neurotic. Other symptoms of the same nature were headaches, constipation, diarrhœa, nausea, local perspiration, and general neurasthenia. The temperature of the body was always normal. Contrary to what we see in herpes of the surface, which heals readily unless maltreated, pemphigus of the mouth is of long standing, and heals but slowly, and gives rise to a great deal of protracted pain and discomfort.

The marked family disposition which is evident in the history of two cases, reminds me strongly of what Carl Blumer has described under the heading of "hereditary disposition to vesiculation" (Prague, 1892). Valentine employed for the same affection the name of hereditary dermatitis bullosa; Köbner called it epidermolysis bullosa hereditaria; and Klebs, dysplasia vasorum. He found the blood vessels in a condition resembling that of hæmophilia; down to the capillaries they consisted pre-eminently of cells of embryonal structure, predisposing to hæmorrhages and exudation. Some of the cases described by Blumer and others (Goldscheider, Valentin, Ferd, Hebra, and Köbner) were complicated with urticaria, swelling

of the lymphatic vessels and lymph-bodies, tumefaction and redness of skin surrounding the vesicles, general malaise when eruptions were copious, hæmorrhages into the vesicles, suppuration and purpura.

Selected Articles.

IS THE "GERM THEORY" A FALLACY? VIEWS OF A SURGICAL INFIDEL.

The *Buffalo Medical and Surgical Journal* for December contains an article by Mr. Lawson Tait, which was read before the Birmingham and Midland Branch of British Medical Association, October 11th, 1894, entitled "A Criticism of the Germ Theory of Disease based on the Baconian Method." At the outset, Mr. Tait says, he wants to remind those persons who now sneer at his views as those of a mere practitioner, that for twelve years he was a hard-working and enthusiastic microscopist, and that during that time he discovered one of the most selective methods of coloring tissue, and was the first man to show that fresh tissue of the greatest delicacy could be cut less than a thousandth part of an inch in thickness. He wishes to recall the fact that he unravelled the minute anatomy of the umbilical cord so completely that not a single fact has been added to or taken from his description during the eighteen years which have elapsed since its publication.

Mr. Tait says that when he entered college the cellular pathology was sweeping all before it, and everybody was mad after a new cell; special courses and special teachers were told off for cellular instruction, and a cellular pathology grew up which was to explain everything. Two parties existed, and of course fought bitterly, and the only real and permanent effect was that the unhappy students had to meet two sets of examiners, and to know two sets of answers to the same questions.

With the improvement in the method of making sections, curious little bright spots in quivering movement were seen between the cells, and were called "vibrating molecules." A molecular pathology grew up, but died with its one exponent. Finally the microscopists have resolved these vibrating molecules into a vast array of little beasts, and promulgated a "germ theory" by which everything is explained and under which everything is squeezed. It is no theory at all, but simply an amusing hypothesis, consisting of a series of interesting facts, misconstrued alike in importance and direction, and quite incapable of co-ordination or practical application.

Mr. Tait says the fact that the origin of certain diseases is due to a poison, has always been recog-