

THE CANADA LANCET

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Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Address, DR. J. L. DAVISON, 12 Charles St., Toronto.

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Editorial.

SEASONABLE SKIN DISEASES.

At this season of the year one is rather more than usually apt to be faced in practice with acute skin-lesions, and not the least frequently occurring just now is that of the Exudations, of which nettle-rash is a typical member. Of course the inflammations come under this large class, whatever may be their cause, heat, bites and stings of insects, the use of fresh or green fruit, or other new and unusual additions to the year's dietary which this season brings, or the gastric and intestinal disturbances peculiar to the season of the fiery Sirius.

Disorders of secretion and of excretion are not so common, except in so far as they affect the sweat glands, hyperidrosis and chromidrosis and the accompanying intertrigo, being frequently seen. The hæmorrhages, the hypertrophies, the atrophies, the tumors, the neuroses, the parasitic affections, are all more apt to pursue the even tenor of their way uninfluenced by the season. Some of the atrophies, such as vitiligo, are, of course, more apt to be a cause of trouble, from the tanning of the hands and face, which so accentuates the unpigmented area, and brings it into evidence against the unguarded practitioner (in the writer's experience always a homœopath) who, in the late autumn promised a positive cure when the patient was driven to him for cosmetic reasons after her summer in the garden, and found that

in the darker season of winter the patches faded, only to be as sharply contrasted as ever when the sun got at them in the spring again.

A disease somewhat in fashion a few weeks ago, especially among boys and young men "of the baser sort," was a peculiar exudation, in gross appearance very erysipelatous, but not advancing by the finger-like projections along the lymphatic areas of the skin seen in the latter affection, but with even border, raised, red, and œdematous, like erysipelas, but without the burning and tensive pain. Constitutional disturbance was absent, but patients and friends were alarmed at the gradual disfigurement of feature, closing up of eyes, distortion of the nose and mouth, produced by the œdema. Two cases of this the writer saw, about the same time, in June, and each was attributable, without any doubt, to the same cause. The patients, though living in widely different parts of the city, and not acquainted with each other, belonged to the army of boys who spend the most of the day, when the swimming season opens, in the green waters of the Don, and where the sun could get at the skin, especially where the hair could constantly, by its dripping, keep the skin alternately moist and dry, some of the infective bacteria of the filthy water had evidently found a suitable nidus, and set up an œdema of the skin, not accompanied by severe inflammation, and marked by no constitutional disturbance. It was a form of *Dermatitis venenata*, not due to poison ivy, not erysipelas, and not sunburn.

Several cases of urticaria have lately been brought under the writer's notice, due mainly to the ordinary cause, absorption from the intestinal canal. As to etiology, the authorities seem agreed that this is the first cause in the order of frequency, and that nervous depression or worry, comes next, then disease of the pelvic viscera, the latter being as frequently as any other, perhaps, the cause of chronic urticaria. The management of these cases, the cause being once intelligently determined, is theoretically simple enough. If digestive disturbance co-exist, give purgatives, and in very acute even cases an emetic is of much service, if the ingestion of the irritant be very recent. The empirical reputation of alkalines and salines in such diseases is probably due to a neutralizing influence upon the toxins in the alimentary canal, if not actually upon those already in the blood, and they