

## ACNE.

Acne, or acne vulgaris, as it is sometimes called, is one of the most common of the diseases of the skin. It constitutes quite a respectable percentage of the grand total, but relief is not sought as often as its frequency would seem to indicate. It consists essentially in an inflammatory condition of the sebaceous glands, and manifests itself in the form of papules, pustules and tubercles distributed for the most part about the face, neck, back and shoulders. The most common forms are the papular and pustular, so named from the predominance of the lesions existing at the time. The forehead is perhaps the portion of the face most frequently attacked, other portions being also implicated, however, quite frequently. There are no subjective symptoms connected with this disease, unless it be a slight pain upon pressure when the disease is in its acute form. The trouble, generally, begins as a papule, varying in size from a pinhead to a split pea, and this may remain as such or become a pustule through the inflammatory action which is present. Should it remain a papule it undergoes more or less resolution, or may enlarge and become a little more indurated, and infiltrate a portion of the underlying tissues and thus become a tubercle. When a pustule forms it develops to its acme, the pus is discharged, a small crust forms, and it heals spontaneously. Successive crops are continually making their appearance, so that it may happen that the patient is never entirely free of the disease for years.

Acne occurs in both sexes about equally, and, as a rule, first makes its appearance at puberty. At this time the whole cutaneous system undergoes a greater or less disturbance, the hair in various portions of the body begins to grow, and the sebaceous glands are prepared for a greater functional activity than they have hitherto possessed.

The causes of acne are varied and numerous. Among those which hold a first place, however, may be mentioned disturbances of the gastro-intestinal tract. Constipation especially is a very fruitful cause of this disease, as also dyspepsia and allied disorders. These are conditions very often found more especially in young women.

Besides this we have uterine disorders, such as dysmenorrhœa, amenorrhœa and genito-urinary disturbances. Renal troubles act as exciting causes of acne, at times. There seems also to be a certain tendency to the disease, in certain families, so that it would almost seem as if some hereditability was attached to it. In addition to the internal causes, a few of the principal ones having only been mentioned, we have external agencies producing the so-called *acne artificialis*. Tar and similar agents are the active agents in its production, whilst the internal use of certain remedies, notably iodide of potassium, produces an artificial acne generally classified under the medicinal eruptions.

The diagnosis of acne is not very difficult. It must be distinguished from eczema, syphilis and small-pox. From the first mentioned disease it is easily distinguished by the absence of itching, and from the fact that eczema of the face is rarely papular or pustular in character. The history, moreover, would serve to distinguish the two very easily. The papular and pustular syphiloderma must be examined a little more closely, especially the acne-form syphiloderm which sometimes occurs upon the forehead as the *corona Veneris*. The history, the presence of other lesions, the tendency of syphilitic lesions to group, and the length of time the lesions exist, if carefully considered, will make the diagnosis clear. As to variola, the history would be sufficient. The chronic nature of acne, the comparatively short period of time between successive crops, the locality attacked, the age of the patient, the inflammatory nature of the lesions, the absence of subjective symptoms, and the anatomical seat of the disease (the sebaceous glands) should never be forgotten.

It is an uncommon thing to see acne in a child before puberty or in a person beyond the forty-fifth year.

The treatment of this disease should be constitutional and local. The general measures employed should be such as will tend to bring the patient to as normal a condition as is possible by therapeutic means. The condition which is most common and most constantly demands attention is the constipation which exists. To overcome this, the diet, in the first place, should be so regulated as to insure the greatest amount of nutrition with the least amount of labor on the part of the stomach, and arranged so as to preclude the condition of constipation or a tendency thereto. To make the bowels more regular, fluid extract of cascara sagrada, or the aperient mineral waters, are useful. An occasional dose of calomel will be of benefit. The following aperient mixture given by Duhring gives excellent results:

R Magnesiæ Sulphatis..... ʒ jss  
Ferri Sulphatis..... gr. xvj  
Acidi Sulphurici dil..... ʒ ij  
Aquæ..... ʒ viij

M.

Sig. Tablespoonful in a tumbler of water.

This should be taken about twenty minutes before breakfast or, if necessary, before supper also.

Besides the general remedies indicated in the case we have some which do good occasionally. Sulphide of calcium, in quarter grain doses four times a day, is sometimes indicated in suppurative form. Arsenic is useful in the indurated forms or where the papules are imperfectly developed, and may be given in two or three drop doses of Fowler's solution in wine of iron, or in one drop doses of a one per cent. alcoholic solution of bromide of arsenic, thrice daily after meals.