
Special Selections

THE DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS OF SMALLPOX.*

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When I was asked to read a paper on smallpox to the Hunterian Society, it appeared to me that the differential diagnosis of that disease would be a subject of interest to the members of the society, and that perhaps my observations might prove helpful to those whose opportunities of observing smallpox have been limited. The diagnosis of smallpox presents difficulties, first, in the pre-eruptive stage and, secondly, in the eruptive stage.

THE DIAGNOSIS OF SMALLPOX IN THE PRE-ERUPTIVE STAGE.

In the pre-eruptive stage difficulties often occur in connection with prodromal rashes, which may simulate scarlet fever and measles. Prodromal rashes resembling scarlet fever are usually best marked on the trunk, the abdomino-cruial triangle—a triangle the base of which is on a level with the umbilicus and the apex, about eight inches below the symphysis pubis—and the flexor surfaces, and they simulate scarlet fever closely in punctate appearance; but the absence of eruption for the most part on the extensor surfaces, the face, the neck, and the temples, and the exemption from faucial inflammation and submaxillary glandular enlargement, should warn one of a diagnosis of scarlet fever, especially if backache be a pronounced symptom. In other cases there is a copious crop of petechiæ in the abdomino-cruial triangle and other flexures. Now, in scarlet fever petechiæ are rarely noted in the abdomino-cruial triangle; more often they appear in other flexures.

Some hemorrhagic cases of smallpox show a vivid red erythema involving the whole of the skin of the trunk and the limbs, with petechiæ in the abdomino-cruial triangle and other flexures, and deep purple or black subcutaneous hemorrhages appear similar to those noted in purpura. Such cases are not infrequently diagnosed as scarlet fever, especially before the appearance of the flexure petechiæ and purpuric spots. The eruption is not at first punctate, like that of scarlet fever, but may quickly assume a pseudo-punctate character on the groins and other flexures, owing to the appearance there of crops of small, deep red petechiæ. The

*A paper read at a special meeting of the Hunterian Society, Nov. 13th, 1901.