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Original Communications.

SYCOSIS AND ALLIED AFFECTIONS ;

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(Read before the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society.)

There are few medical terms which have under-
gone such little change in definition as sycosis. In
the therapeutical classification of skin diseases
adopted by Celsus it was included among those
local diseases amenable to treatment by medicine,
and was defined to be a tuberculated eruption on
the hairy parts of the face. For Celsus, good
Roman though he was, adopted the Greek name
of the affection, which Erasmus Wilson refers to
group "Objective" division or sub-group "Figure"
in an attempted classification of the terms em-
ployed by Hippocrates and probably by Æscula-
pius.

And, broadly speaking, any disease affecting
the hair and hair-follicles of the face is now also
called sycosis.

It is true that a well-educated practitioner
would not stop at satisfying himself that he had a
case of capillary folliculitis—he would enquire
further as to the cause and nature of the inflamma-
tory change ; and it is also true that in late years
the various pathological processes that manifest
themselves in the different parts of the hair and its
follicle are well defined, but the very difference in
the nomenclature adopted by different dermatolo-
gists do not seem to have altered the general mean-

ing of the word as accepted by Celsus, and perhaps
by Hippocrates.

In 1854 Erasmus Wilson called sycosis a form of
"acne" and in 1871 he describes it as including
several varieties and degrees of disease. Squire, in
Reynold's System, confines the term to that "dis-
ease of the hairy parts of the face caused by the
presence in the root sheath of *microsporon menta-
grophytes*." Liveing speaks of sycosis as a non-
contagious disease of the hairy face which is
neither eczema nor acne nor a syphilide. He also
takes a liberty with the term, and defines *S. para-
sitica* as the result of the ravages in the hair of the
face of the *trichophyton tonsurans*. Pifford does the
same ; while George Henry Fox thinks that, though
sycosis is a term which is loosely applied to nearly
every affection of the bearded portion of the face,
its use ought to be restricted to that inflammatory
condition of the hair follicles and adjacent cellular
tissue which is characterized by pustules perforated
by hairs which in time become so loosened that
they can be extracted by the gentlest traction of
the epilatory forceps. Bateman and Bristowe
follow the definition of Erasmus Wilson, while, in
his Practice of Medicine, Roberts, speaking of
sycosis as an inflammation of the hair follicles and
sebaceous glands, says the condition may be
brought about by various causes.

Without further multiplying authorities I think
I have shown that I am justified, in the absence of
agreement among authorities, in defining sycosis to
be any disease of the hairy face affecting the root
sheaths or follicles, which gives rise to induration
and swelling of the interfollicular tissues. In this
category, excluding the syphilides and lupus, are
included at least three, and possibly four, distinct