

clinical aspects of the subject. That eczema proper, at one time or other of its course, may be papular, vesicular, pustular, or scaly is a clearly proved fact; and the widening of our conceptions from the narrow limits of vesicles to the broader basis which comprehends the manifold characters of the affection, and the recognition of a unity in these interchanging features, is a great advance. But to strain the idea of unity so as to sweep into this vortex of classification all the affections which may come under eczema used as a generic term, and to discard the older nomenclature, is to introduce error and confusion, which can only retard the progress of this branch of medicine.

This is specially felt in studying the subject in reference to children. Recent writers, under the influence of Hebra and his followers, now regard as mere varieties of eczema, what ought still to be held as distinct affections, and are thereby losing the more definite and practical views of the older writers, who speak of scald head or *porrigo larvalis*, of eczema and of *impetigo*. Each of these terms has become associated with distinct clinical affections, and conveys an idea to the mind not limited to mere external characters.

For the sake of this definite idea I prefer to retain the old names, however inaccurate they may now be. The opinions which determined their assumption are now immaterial, so long as we can convey a definite idea thereby; and this is the case when we speak of *porrigo*, of eczema, and of *impetigo*. But to say that a child has eczema capitis, may mean either *porrigo* or eczema proper; or to speak of eczema pustulosum conveys only the appearance of the affection at the time, we know not whether it may be eczema proper or *impetigo*.

Viewing these affections in their broad clinical aspect, and leaving out of consideration all reference to the complicating question of vesicles and pustules, there will be found sufficient differences to warrant us in regarding them as clinically distinct affections.

They bear a most important relation to age or development. Each of them is connected with a distinct period of childhood. It is this dependence upon development which distinguishes the eczema of childhood from that of the adult. Under its influence we see its character modified according to the age of the child: we find it obstinate under treatment at the earlier stage, and amenable or undergoing a spontaneous cure as the period peculiar to it draws to a close. *Porrigo* is much more limited in its duration, while *impetigo* belongs to a later period of development than the other two.

*Porrigo* and eczema frequently affect several members of a family, but not indiscriminately; the two I have never seen in the same family. That the tendency to one or other form is due to inherited peculiarities cannot be doubted. Although Hebra is sceptical of an inherited nature, his arguments are entirely against hereditary transmission, which is quite a distinct thing.

For purposes of prognosis and treatment, and for truth sake, I hold that the "scald head," the "por-

*rigo larvalis*" of Bateman, and the "achore" of Alibert, is essentially a distinct affection and is not to be confounded with eczema. It is limited to the period of dentition and the cutting of each tooth will be found to influence the eruption to a greater extent than in eczema. At the end of that process it shows a marked tendency to spontaneous and rapid cure; the cases where further prolonged being due to deteriorated health or want of attention. It attacks the head and face, but the skin of the rest of the body retains the soft and elastic characters of health. There is a greater tendency than in eczema at this age to the secretion of pus and the formation of the variety called eczema *impetiginodes*.

*Impetigo* is, as I have already said, an affection of a later period of childhood, belonging properly to the period of the second dentition, but to be met with from the third year upwards. The pustular elements predominate, the crusts have quite a different character from those of *porrigo* or eczema, and there is wanting the profuseness of discharge peculiar to them. Children, moreover, who have never had any affection of the skin are as liable to it as those who have.

Children are liable to a simple form of eczema, limited in extent, and amenable to treatment; to such affections the following remarks are not intended to apply. Such cases are more allied to the affection as it occurs in adults than the forms of which I am treating.

Eczema *infantis* proper, is an affection which runs throughout childhood, from the earliest months of infancy to near puberty. It frequently, and in severe cases generally manifests itself as early as the second or third month. It shows a preference to attack the head and face, but the rest of the body is rarely left free from evidence of one or other of its manifold forms. Even in those children who suffer from the head affection in its mildest type, and where there may be a difficulty in determining between it and *porrigo*, the skin generally is liable to become dry and rough, and subject to prurigo or scaly eruptions in different parts of the body. In these respects it contrasts markedly with *porrigo*. In the severer forms the influence of age is very marked. Until some time after the end of the first dentition, the secreting element predominates, but the influence of dentition upon it is less marked than in *porrigo*. In the third year the head generally gets well, and the tendency in the rest of the body is to become scaly or papular, although cases are to be met with where the vesicular character is retained till a later period.

The sixth year I believe may be taken as the natural limit of this constitutional form of eczema. In cases that have continued to this time a decided spontaneous tendency to a comparatively healthy condition of the skin may be observed, or the affection proves much more amenable to treatment at that age. There is abundant evidence to show that the sixth year marks a developmental period which influences many other affections. After this time should the skin still manifest an unhealthy action it is generally