

CAUSATION OF SKIN DISEASE.

In beginning this letter, I cannot resist the inclination to indicate in a few words the great importance of the new chemical researches of M. Gautier (presented before the Paris Academy of Medicine, Jan. 19, 1886), in their bearing upon the pathogeny of diseases in general, and of diseases of the skin in particular. For some time past, I have already, in several articles, expressed myself in accord with my friend, Dr. Barthélemy, that the explanation of many dermatoses of obscure origin was furnished us by the eruptions which develop after the ingestion of certain substances, especially the medicaments. In the latter case, it must be admitted that the noxious foreign element, after having been absorbed and taken up in the circulatory current, goes to act either upon the nervous system or directly upon the integument, and develops an eruption quite characteristic in the majority of cases, for the noxious substance is promptly eliminated. We insist that it would be quite logical to admit the same pathogeny for a large class of eruptions, especially for rebellious and recurrent eczemas, which are so frequently observed in certain persons, especially the gouty.

We believe that they are caused by the accumulation in the blood of these patients of the products of incomplete assimilation, tending to the impoverishment of their nutrition—products which must of necessity be injurious to the organism.

The researches of M. Gautier confirm our theory in a novel manner. For some time we have known that after death there are produced in the cadaver toxic alkaloids, to which are given the name of ptomaines. M. Gautier has demonstrated that in our organism, even during life, there are likewise produced alkaloids more or less toxic, more or less injurious, to which he has given the name of leucomaines, and which, when not destroyed by the oxygen of the blood, or eliminated either by the kidneys or alimentary canal, may, by thus accumulating in the economy, occasion morbid phenomena. Let any cause whatever, then, hinder hematosis, diminish the oxidating power of the hematics, interfere with the eliminating action of the various

emunctories of the body, and soon the blood, surcharged with toxic principles, will find itself, in relation to the skin, precisely in the same condition as if it had been vitiated by the ingestion of a medicinal substance capable of promoting an artificial eruption.

For my part, I have come to the conclusion that, from the point of view of this pathogeny, the diseases of the skin of actually known origin may be divided in four grand classes.

1. Artificial eruptions from mechanical, external cause, or eruptions directly provoked.

2. Artificial eruptions from internal cause or provoked indirectly—the pathogenetic affections of Bazin—resulting from the ingestion of alimentary or noxious medicamentous substances.

3. Eruptions depending upon the vitiation of the blood and of the entire economy by the leucomaines.

4. Eruptions of parasitic nature, animal or vegetable parasites and microbes, bacilli in particular.

I do not believe, as one of our savant professors asserted before the Academy of Medicine, that the discovery of leucomaines will prove to be the death-blow of microbial theories; I believe that the two discoveries complement each other. It is not possible to explain all by the microbes alone, or by the leucomaines alone. But in admitting the reality or these two grand causes of disease, the pathogeny of nearly all diseases seems to us clear, logical, rational, established upon a basis almost impregnable.—*L. Brocq in Journal of Cutaneous Diseases.*

A NEAT METHOD OF PERFORMING HELLER'S TEST.—Take a very small test-tube, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in calibre: Fill one-third with nitric acid; fold one or more 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter filter papers twice, thus making a funnel, and insert its point into the mouth of the test-tube, supporting it by the forefinger holding the tube. Then pour into the funnel about a drachm of the inspected urine; it will run through quite clear and form a sharp cut white ring at the junction of the two tubes if albumen be present.—*Dr. T. S. K. Morton, in Med. News.*