PART II.
CRITICAL ANALYSIS.

I.

Description des Maladies de la Peau, observées à l'Hopital St Louis, et Exposition des meilleures Methodes suivies pour leur Traitement. Avec figures colorées. Par J. L. Alibert, Medecin, &c. &c. 3ieme et 4ieme Livraison.

[Continued from Vol. III. page 461 of this Journal.]

LES DARTRES, OU HERPES.

Every one conversant with the writings of the French physicians, knows how familiarly, and how vaguely the term Dartres is employed, and that it is often difficult to understand precisely what diseases of the skin they mean to comprehend under it. Alibert seems to pride himself much on the observations he has made on these diseases, and the classification by which he has arranged them. We know not as yet, fully, the extent of these, as, in the numbers before us, he has described five species only, the Herpes Furfuraceus, Squamosus, Crustaceus, Exedens, and Pustulosus. But that he has arranged under the head of Herpes, a number of diseases of very different characters, and which have been kept separate by more accurate nosologists, appears evident enough from his general observations, and indeed from the very showy and sometimes accurate plates of the present numbers. Different species of lepra, lichen, and psoriasis, are classed under the genus herpes; or, to judge from the following observation, a still greater variety of diseases. "Herpetic eruptions, in some circumstances, hardly show themselves above the skin; in other cases, they cover it with hard scales, thick crusts, tuberculous pustules, horrible phlyctenes, sordid ulcers, &c. Some inundate the neighbouring organs with a fetid and ichorous sanies, or establish, in the mucous membranes, vicious secretions, spreading sores which consume and destroy the integuments, as the bark of trees is devoured by destructive insects."

Though
Though these diseases have commonly been supposed to be of a contagious nature, it does not appear from observation that they are easily generated in this way. Alibert tells us, that he and his pupils have applied the matter of herpetic crusts and pustules to various parts of their skin, without ever producing the disease; a similar observation was made by the anonymous author of the 6th number of the Inquirer, Vol. ii. of this Journal. That the natural functions of the skin, when affected by these diseases, should be impaired, or interrupted, seemed highly probable: a complete interruption of the cutaneous exhalation has accordingly been observed by our author. "We have observed," says he, "at the hospital St Louis, patients, in whom the cuticular transpiration was interrupted, and replaced by an exhalation from the lungs, more abundant than natural. This exhalation was sometimes so profuse, that, condensed by the cold of the air, it fell like dew on the blankets and bed-covers of the patients."

Sp. 1st. Herpes Furfuraceus.—Eruption appearing on one or more parts of the skin, in the form of slight exfoliations of the epidermis, resembling the molecules of meal, or scales of bran. These little scales sometimes adhere strongly to the skin, sometimes separate very easily.

Varieties.—a. Herpes Furfuraceus volitans.—So named, because it spreads successively over different parts of the body. Besides, the farinous matter, and little scales, detach themselves so easily, that they are collected abundantly in the beds of those affected. It is this variety which is sometimes seen on the face of those who have shaved with a bad or foul razor. Those who have fair, or red hair, a white skin, and little energy, are particularly subject to this variety.

b. Herpes Furfuraceus circinalis.—Attacks, commonly, strong and robust subjects, of the bilious and sanguine temperament. It forms circular and rounded patches on the skin, the borders towards the middle being most elevated; as the patches enlarge, the centre often becomes quite sound, and regains its natural colour. This variety is observed, commonly, on the arms and legs, particularly near the articulations of the elbow and knee.

The herpes furfuraceus thus assumes very different forms; sometimes it appears as a loose, and fine white-coloured farina; at others, it is observed in the form of circular or orbicular scaly patches, with rough, prominent, elevated edges. It is observed sometimes on the scalp, but most commonly on the fore-arm, and in the neighbourhood of the knee and elbow-joints. Sometimes it spreads over the whole body. It is much disposed
posed to spread, healing in one part while it extends on the other; hence the name of serpigo, by which it has sometimes been designated. The itching which accompanies this species, though commonly not very considerable, is sometimes distressing, especially when it attacks parts of much sensibility, as the organs of generation of either sex. The general health is seldom affected, or much disturbed by this cutaneous disease.

Plate XI. represents the first variety of Herpes Turruraceus, affecting the scalp, and appears to us to be the same with the Pityriasis Capitis of Willan; and Plate XII. representing an example of the second variety, occurring on the fore-arm, bears a strong resemblance to the psoriasis, and even the lepra vulgaris.

**Sp. 2d. Herpes Squamosus.**—Characterized by exfoliations of the epidermis, which form scales larger than those of the first species. These scales are easily torn from the skin, when laid hold of by the nails or fingers, and, as they dry, often fall off spontaneously.

- **a. Herpes Squamosus madidans.**—In this variety, the skin pours out continually an ichorous humour, sometimes very abundantly. It is chiefly observed on the ears, nose, and genital organs; but it often occupies the whole of the dermoidal system, to the unspeakable distress of the patient.

- **b. Herpes Squamosus orbicularis.**—It is commonly dry, and appears for the most part in the form of several concentric circles. The dry scales are successively thrown off, and renewed. It is ordinarily found on the middle of the cheeks.

- **c. Herpes Squamosus centrifugus.**—Appears in the palms of the hands, in form of circles, or orbicular points, from the desiccation of the epidermis, which becomes white. These circles, more or less numerous, enlarge from the centre to the circumference, till the whole hand is completely deprived of its epidermis, which is then reproduced, and the affection disappears.

- **d. Herpes Squamosus lichenoides.**—Formed of white, hard, coriaceous scales, exactly resembling the lichens in colour and consistence; so that a patient at the hospital St Louis seemed wholly covered with these parasite vegetations.

The Herpes Squamosus is a much more severe affection than the farinosus. At its commencement, the skin appears red, and inflamed in several points; a number of minute pustules appear, accompanied with considerable itching, and discharge of an acrid ichorous matter, which has an odour very similar to that of the heated farina of worm-eaten wood. The vessels connecting the epidermis with the skin are destroyed, and
and large, humid, transparent scales are formed, fall off, and are replaced by others. The exfoliation of these scales takes place on one edge, while the other remains strongly attached. This, he thinks, serves to distinguish the herpes squamosus from the farinosus, the scales of which detach themselves around their whole circumference. When the herpes squamosus is very humid, the pruritus is proportionally aggravated, and becomes sometimes insupportable. In the herpes squamosus lichenoides, he has seen the nails affected with disease, and sometimes fall off with the desquamation of the skin. The cellular membrane sometimes becomes oedematous, the face and whole body swells, and various dropsical appearances, and internal affections, arising from obstructions, are observed. This species of herpes is commonly accompanied and connected with general derangement of the health. Then, not frequently, says our author, dreadful consequences follow, and, as the ancients justly observed, lichen becomes the forerunner of lepra. And indeed, sometimes the skin is chopped in a dreadful manner, the hair falls off, a purulent, fetid matter exudes, which forms at once crusts and scales; hectic fever supervenes; the nights are disturbed by excruciating pain, and universal pruritus; the body is consumed; marasmus follows; and death closes the scene.

Sp. 3. Herpes Crustaceus.—Various figured crusts, of a yellow, grey, whitish, or greenish colour, which remain attached to the skin for a longer or shorter time, and, when they do fall off, are replaced by others.

Varieties.—A. Herpes Crustaceus florescens.—This variety is produced by an exudation of a yellow colour, which, becoming dry, forms crusts resembling honey, or the gummy exudations of certain trees. In its progress it somewhat resembles erysipelas. The cellular tissue is somewhat swelled; most commonly it appears on the middle of one or both cheeks; but our author has also observed it on other parts of the body.

b. Herpes Crustaceus procumbens.—So named from the crust which it forms, hanging like a stalactite from the part which it occupies. It is commonly attached to the oae nasi.

c. Herpes Crustaceus musciformis.—Our author is the first who has noticed this variety. It much resembles the mosses which grow on the roofs of houses. The crusts are greenish, surrounded with a red areola, and as it were set in the skin, which is always a little swelled; hence the crusts are removed with difficulty. It is observed on the hands, on the lower part of the thigh, and on the face. When the crust falls off, there is observed
served beneath it a sort of fleshy, prominent, granulated shoot, on which the ichorous matter concretes.

The herpes crustaceus makes its appearance at first under the form of small flattened pustules, about the size of millet seeds, which burst, pour out an ichorous fluid, which is converted, in drying, into various figured crusts.

This is at times a violent disease. The face becomes covered with a crustaceous matter, adhering more or less strongly to the skin, which is red and inflamed. The cellular texture becomes swelled; and where there are no crusts, the epidermis is often hard and rough, or covered with little scales. Where the skin has been injured by the scratching of the patient, there appear little quick fleshy papulae, which continually pour out an ichorous or purulent matter. "And such," says our author, "is sometimes the disposition of the skin to this disease, that when blisters have been applied to the arms, or to other parts, an herpes is there excited, perfectly similar to that before existing on other parts of the body.

Commonly the herpes crustaceus is attended with much itching, amounting to a sensation of burning in the variety floresceus. The herpes crustaceus is not a very stubborn disease; but when it occurs in scrofulous or scorbutic habits, it often resists, for a long time, every sort of treatment.

Sp. 4th. Herpes Exedens.—Appears in the form of pustules, or corroding ulcers. These furnish a fetid and ichorous matter. They destroy not the skin alone, but attack and corrode the muscles, cartilages, and even the bones.

Varieties.—a. Herpes Exedens idiopathicus.—Occurs without any apparent cause, and may be referred to a particular degeneration of the humours, which it is impossible to determine.

b. Herpes Exedens scrophulosus.

c. Herpes Exedens syphiliticus.

The Herpes Exedens has been distinguished by a variety of names, herpes estiomenus, lupus vorax, papula fera, formica corrosiva.

At the commencement of this terrible evil, the mucous membrane of the skin becomes red, hard, and swelled into unequal lumps. A dull pain is felt in the parts; the surface is itchy, and the patients seek relief in vain from scratching themselves. Soon the epidermis gives way; the reticular membrane is injured; the whole skin becomes irritated and inflamed; and an ulcerated pustule is formed, which discharges an ichorous matter, so acrid that it inflames the neighbouring parts, and extends the disease. Almost always, the matter forms a large crust, which covers the parts destroyed; and this crust, when it falls off, is soon replaced by
by another. At last the disease encroaches on the parts beneath; the skin is deeply destroyed; the bones become carious; and the matter becomes more fetid and more corrosive. The patients now suffer from want of rest; they sink under a slow fever; the internal functions, particularly those of digestion, are affected; and a colliquative diarrhoea still further depresses the vital powers. "In short," says our author, "all the organic systems partake of the local affection. The lymphatic system and abdominal viscera become obstructed; the sallow complexion shows that the spleen is affected; the liver soon suffers a similar change; the feet become oedematous; and the increasing colliquative flux soon puts an end to the unhappy sufferer.

The herpes exedens seldom attacks more than one point of the surface at a time. Its most usual seat is the face, on the nose, or the upper lip; sometimes it advances from these parts towards the forehead; sometimes too, though rarely, the author has seen it in other parts, as in the loins and thighs. The herpes exedens has been confounded with cancer by some authors; but they are easily distinguished. Though attended with a sensation of heat and burning, the herpes exedens is not accompanied by those sharp and lancinating pains which characterize cancer. It has neither the same fetid odour, the same colour, nor the same appearance which belong to cancer. In cancer, a fleshy fungus shoots out, the edges of the ulcer are hard, callous, and retroverted, and the blood-vessels are dilated and varicose. In herpes exedens, nothing more is observed than a red and inflamed circle, more or less extended, which surrounds the pustular point or ulcer.

Sp. 5th. Herpes Pustulosus.—Pustules of various size, more or less crowded, on one or more parts of the surface. The matter contained in these pustules dries and forms scales, or thin crusts, which, falling off, are replaced by reddish-coloured maculae.

Varieties.—a. Herpes Pustulosus mentagra; so called when seated on the chin.

b. Herpes Pustulosus gutta-rosea; commonly situated on the nose, cheeks, and forehead of those addicted to the abuse of spirituous liquors.—Observed by the author to be often complicated with a scorbatic affection of the gums.

c. Herpes Pustulosus miliaris; eruption of small white shining grains, perfectly like millet-seeds; often observed on the forehead of young girls approaching to puberty.

d. Herpes Pustulosus disseminatus; so called because it is composed of reddish pustules, dispersed here and there over the skin. The pustules are much larger than those of the preceding varieties. They are very obstinate, and, when they do disappear,
leave dirty red spots behind them. It commonly is observed on the breast and shoulders, sometimes on the face.

The pustules of the herpes pustulosus discharge a quantity of matter, which, drying, forms scales or thin crusts, which fall off, after having remained a longer or shorter time attached to the skin. As these pustules dry, others arise and go through the same course. They assume different forms; sometimes they are small, inflamed, and surrounded with a red circle, and grouped together in a corymbus; sometimes the skin is raised and swollen; at other times, the pustules, of different sizes, are scattered over a large surface, &c.

(To be continued.)

II.

Remarks on the Frequency and Fatality of different Diseases, particularly on the progressive increase of Consumption: with Observations on the influence of the Seasons on Mortality. By William Woolcombe, M. D. 8vo. London, 1808.

The best way of making the plan of this work known to our readers, will be to transcribe the following passage from the preface.

"In submitting to the Public the result of his own inquiries concerning some points of Statistical Medicine, the design of the Author will be accomplished, if it shall be found that some useful addition has been made to the stock of authentic materials, some useful suggestions offered, conducive to the more successful investigation of subjects which he deems of importance, of questions in which he thinks the interest of the public intimately concerned. Of the tables which constitute the essential part of the following pages, the first five have been formed from materials afforded by the register of the medical cases occurring at the Public Dispensary at Plymouth, in a period of seven years from the establishment of the institution. In framing them, the object has been to exhibit the proportionate prevalence of different diseases, and the absolute and relative mortality resulting from them; as well as to afford grounds for instituting a comparison between the prevalence of diseases in different districts at the same period, and in the same district at different periods."—Preface, ii.