

CLINICAL REMARKS ON A CASE OF HERPES GESTATIONIS.

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HERPES GESTATIONIS is a rare affection of the skin, which has been described by several writers, but under different names. It may be briefly defined as a disease of neurotic origin, occurring in pregnant or parturient women, and characterised by an eruption of small bullæ, accompanied by excessive pruritus. It is probable that Hebra refers to this or a similar disease when he says, "the existence of a real pemphigus hystericus is proved by the occurrence of this eruption as a constant accompaniment of pregnancy, and by its disappearance (in such cases) within a short time after delivery." Chausit, Hardy, and Wilson have described cases of this disease, the two former under the name of pemphigus pruriginosus, and the latter under that of herpes circinatus bullosus. In M. Chausit's case the pruritus was excessive during the last four months of pregnancy, but the eruption of blebs did not appear until the fifth day after delivery; six weeks later the whole of the eruption had disappeared. Within the last few years Mr. Milton and Mr. D. Bulkley, of New York, have called especial attention to the same affection under the name of herpes gestationis, and the latter has collected from different sources records of nine cases to illustrate the characteristic features of the disease, which may be briefly stated as follows:—(1) The affection occurs in pregnant or parturient women; (2) the eruption consists of solid papules and small bullæ of unequal size, for the most part as large as a split pea, but occasionally attaining the size of a filbert, or larger; (3) the blebs have a tendency to appear in clusters, and are most abundant on the extremities, especially on the forearms, hands, and about the knees; (4) the eruption is attended with intense pruritus, which often precedes the development of the bullæ, and lasts for some time after they have disappeared; (5) the eruption leaves dark purplish and brown pigment spots on the skin; (6) the disease does not usually disappear immediately after delivery, but gradually subsides in a month or six weeks, there is often a relapse or a fresh outbreak of the eruption on or about the third day after parturition; (7) the constitutional symptoms are usually slight, and are probably in part due to disturbed rest from the pruritus; aching in the limbs and neuralgic pains are, however, common.

A patient suffering from this disease has recently been under my observation at the Middlesex Hospital. Her history is briefly as follows. She is thirty-seven years of age, and perfectly healthy. During the latter months of a recent pregnancy she suffered from intense pruritus, and some

neuralgic pain in the limbs, but from no rash on the skin. On the third day after delivery a copious eruption of scattered solid papules and discrete vesicles appeared; the latter quickly developed into blebs of various sizes, the majority being about as large as split peas, but some attaining the diameter of a shilling, and a few were as large as a florin. They appeared chiefly on the hands, arms, and legs, and especially about the knees, while a moderate number were scattered over the rest of the body. The bullæ had a tendency to form groups, but were all discrete, the skin in the neighbourhood being more or less covered with scattered solid papules as large as good-sized shot. The itching was intense, far more severe, indeed, than in an ordinary case of eczema, and there was some aching pain in the limbs and joints. The outbreak of the eruption was acute and almost sudden, subsiding gradually, so that by the end of three weeks it had greatly diminished. A relapse then occurred, with a fresh outbreak (not so severe as the first) of bullæ on the arms and legs, but not on the trunk; the pruritus was intolerable, and prevented all sleep at night. The eruption subsided as before, and seven weeks after delivery she was free from all symptoms except itching and considerable dark discoloration of the skin which had been the seat of the eruption. Throughout the attack she nursed the baby, which was perfectly healthy. The appearance of the eruption in this case was quite peculiar, and the mixture of hard solid papules with blebs of various sizes was very characteristic. The skin was quite free from eczematous excoriations.

The only point in which this case differs from similar ones recorded by others is the fact that the eruption did not develop until after delivery, and in this respect it resembles Chausit's case, in which the eruption of blebs first appeared on the fifth day after parturition; but the intense pruritus which existed during the latter months of pregnancy in both his case and the one I have described above points to a cutaneous neurosis, although no eruption was then visible.

I regard this disease as very closely allied to Bazin's *bullous hydroa*, and I prefer the name *hydroa gestationis* to *herpes gestationis*, but the point is of no importance.