TO ILLUSTRATE DR. ERNEST MALLAM'S NOTE ON AN UNUSUAL COMPLICATION FOLLOWING TATTOOING.

CLINICAL NOTES.

AN UNUSUAL COMPLICATION FOLLOWING TATTOOING.

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OWING doubtless to the general use of the electric needle for tattooing and to the discontinuance of relying entirely on the saliva of the operator as the sole lubricant during the performance, complications such as cellulitis, syphilis, and tubercle are now relatively very infrequent. And, considering the number of men who have been tattooed during recent years, I submit that it is remarkable how rarely any disaster follows, and therefore feel called on to report one which came under my notice.

In June, 1915, A. R—, aged 33 years, a sapper in the Royal Engineers, was tattooed at Chatham, on the backs of both forearms and wrists, with a decoration of the realistic if somewhat indelicate type so popular with Tommy Atkins, which was coloured red and blue.

All went well till two years after, when, during the summer of 1917, a number of warty growths began to appear on the red areas of the figures. When he came into my ward in the Third Southern General Hospital in the following winter it was noted that absolutely all the red areas, but only the red areas and a very small margin round them, were affected. By this time these warty tumours had been steadily growing for six months and were beginning to show cracks and small necrotic areas, though there was a complete absence of any discharge or exudate. They were entirely confined to the skin, which was freely moveable and not otherwise indurated or inflamed. There was no evidence of glandular infection or of other metastases. The naked-eye appearance and distribution of the affection is well shown in the illustrations.

By the kindness of Capt. F. C. Linton, R.A.M.C.(T.), I was able to ascertain that the man had been tattooed in the usual manner, with a large number of others, by a so-called "professor," who practised the art as a livelihood at Chatham. I obtained some of the red pigment

used, which proved to be ordinary vermilion, or sulphide of mercury. I found it impossible to arrive at any hypothesis as to why this man, after two years of good health, should react in this peculiar manner. The Wassermann was negative and there was no history or evidence of any constitutional disease.

A specimen was removed and examined histologically by Dr. Gibson, whose report I give *verbatim* :

"The pigment-granules lie in the corium, and are surrounded by intense proliferation of connective-tissue elements. The epidermis is markedly hypertrophied and actively proliferating. Cell-nests are present. There is polymorphonuclear leucocytosis both in the corium and epidermis. There is no evidence of any infecting agent. The whole appearance is that of an epithelial papilloma of doubtful malignancy, and should be allied to the condition of chimney-sweeps' carcinoma and the carcinoma of paraffin workers. The causal agent is undoubtedly the pigment."

I have hesitated to accept this reading without obtaining other opinions. Drs. Gray and O'Donovan have also kindly examined the section for me, and have expressed the view that the warty overgrowth is not of the nature of carcinoma cutis, but rather that of lupus verrucosus.

Treatment first with X-rays and subsequently with CO₂ snow had very little effect on it, though as time was a great consideration the latter was only given a short and half-hearted trial, and resort was had to the surgeon, who removed all the affected areas.

The wounds all healed up well.

I have recently seen the man and found that the skin of both arms is quite healthy, and free from either warty growths or keloids.

He is working as a bricklayer, and has developed a group of aggregated warts about the size of half-a-crown on the palm of his left hand, and another about a quarter that size on the right.

These are evidently due to the irritation of his work, and are disappearing quickly under the local treatment provided by his doctor, assisted by the protection afforded by a glove. But their very presence suggests that his skin reacts to any irritation more readily than that of the ordinary labourer.

He appeared to be otherwise well and free from blemish.

It is probable that more experienced dermatologists are familiar

with this condition, but I have only been able to trace one other similar case, *i. e.* that reported by Fox in the *Amer. Journ. Cut. and Gen.-Urin. Dis.*, ii, p. 216. Here the warts—which came one year after tattooing—were numerous, discrete, and apparently much smaller than most of those on my patient. With one exception they were scattered on the indigo lines. We are not told the position of this exception. As the case was four years old when reported, we are given to infer that it was easily cured and caused no suspicion of malignancy or other trouble.

NOTE ON DR. NOXON TOOMEY'S ARTICLE ON HYPODERMIASIS (OX-WARBLE DISEASE).

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As the bibliographical references to the occurrence of gad-fly larvæ in the skin of man, which are mentioned in Dr. Noxon Toomey's interesting article "Hypodermiasis (Ox-warble Disease)" in the *British Journal of Dermatology and Syphilis*, February, 1922, are not complete, nor entirely correct as far as Norwegian literature is concerned, I would put forward some supplementary remarks, amongst which is the observation that the disease here in Norway has been known and described over a much longer period than Dr. Toomey has mentioned, and that the number of cases reported is considerably larger.

The first apparently to have noticed the occurrence of gad-fly larvæ in human skin were the well known naturalists Alexander v. Humbolt and Bonpland; on their journey in the years 1799–1804 to the equinoctial countries in America they detected a species of gad-fly which attacked man, in whom it produced abscesses which most commonly were found on the abdomen. Similar occurrences were apparently noticed in Surinam, where Lambré in Paramaibo (see *Nederland. Weekblad vor Geneeskunde*, July 5th, 1852) observed the larva of an *œstrus* beneath the skin of a human being. The larva, which was well known there by the name "Muskeeten-Wurm" gave rise to circumscribed swellings in the skin on different parts of

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