

BLACK HAIRY TONGUE—HYPERKERATOSIS LINGUAE.*

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The purpose of this communication is merely to place on record an instance of this rare and curious lesion,—not to attempt any detailed consideration of the subject other than to call attention to the symptoms, or more properly the lack of them, in the given case.

About the first of November, 1908, I was led to look at my own tongue by the persistent sensation, which had lasted for several days, of having a tooth-brush bristle, a mustache hair, or some similar substance in contact with its upper surface. This irritation impelled me to scrape it with my upper teeth and expectorate frequently, in the effort to dislodge the supposed foreign material.

There was at no time the slightest pain or tenderness. Two-thirds of the distance from the tip to the circumvallate papillae, on the left side, was an area, ovoid in form, measuring about three-quarters by one-half an inch, slightly elevated and of a dark brown color. The surface of the tongue was otherwise entirely clean and normal in appearance. On stroking this area with a probe, the papillae were raised into a sort of crest such as is seen on the fur of a soft-haired animal after immersion. Some of the papillae were at least three-eighths of an inch in length. A number were cut off, en masse, with scissors, and submitted to Dr. Archibald Murray for examination. Dr. Murray reported as follows:

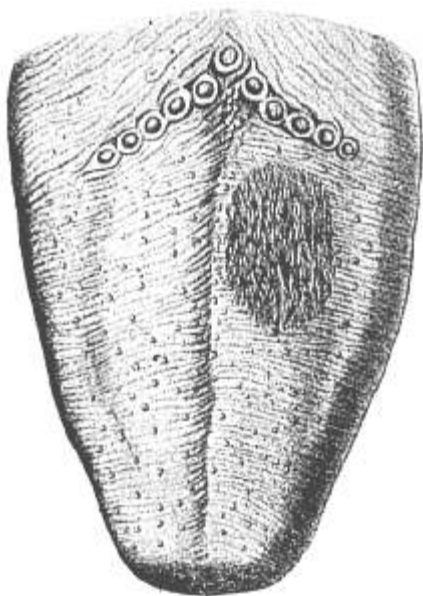
"The microscopic findings in the case of 'hairy tongue' are as follows: The tongue papillae are of the filiform variety; their length varies, I should say, between 8 and 10 mm. (normal length averages 0.7 to 3 mm.). Beside this great increase in length, the horny epithelium is seen to be largely augmented, the cells being piled one upon another. The connective tissue papillae are also increased in length and very slender. Some of their tips are seen to be denuded of epithelium. On the surface of the epithelium can be seen quite a large number of micro-organisms,—cocci and bacilli. Examined in the fresh state the papillae have a dark brownish color. The process evidently corresponds to a hyperkeratosis.

A. MURRAY."

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Within the next week, I demonstrated the lesion to a number of colleagues and hoped to exhibit myself to the Section on Laryngology toward the end of the month, but in about ten days the trouble had entirely disappeared and has since given no indication of any tendency to recur. Absolutely no treatment was instituted.

I was at the time in excellent physical condition,—am a pretty constant smoker and use alcohol occasionally. There is, as far as I know, no luetic taint and practically never any gastric or intestinal disturbance.



Blegvad, in Vol. XX. of Fraenkel's Archiv, has found in literature 138 cases, including ten of his own, which he describes exhaustively. His article was published in full in English in a recent number of *The Annals of Laryngology and Rhinology*. Apparently there have been reports of eight previous cases in this country.

There are a few points of interest on which he dwells. The etiology seems very vague,—syphilis and tobacco addiction have appeared in a number of cases, but not with sufficient constancy to be striking.

The duration has varied from two days to thirteen years. Treatment seems to be entirely without result.

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