

St. Bartholomew's
Hospital



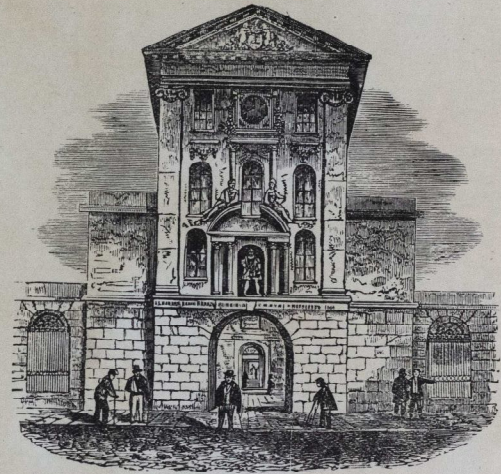
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St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal,

OCTOBER, 1901.

"Æquam memento rebus in arduis
Servare mentem."—Horace, Book ii, Ode iii.

A Clinical Lecture on Rodent Ulcer.

By H. T. BUTLIN, F.R.C.S., D.C.L., delivered 13th November, 1901.

(Reported by S. R. SCOTT, M.B.LOND.)

GENTLEMEN, I propose to-day to give what may be termed a "house lecture," referring to a case in the Hospital and under treatment, therefore of interest to those who attend my practice in the wards, but not intended for publication.

Here is a man with a "rodent ulcer" below the left eye.

It has eaten in much more deeply below the inner canthus, but it extends outwards almost to the margin of the orbit, and the lower lid is already a little everted by the adjacent disease. Where the ulcer is not covered with scab it is nodular and without granulations. In some places the margin of the disease is raised and hard. But there is scarcely anything which would attract attention as new growth.

To compare with it, here is a man with an ulcer of the cheek, which is surrounded with heaped-up tissue, and which is probably due to one of the infective diseases.

When I first came up to the Hospital the teaching as regards rodent ulcer was very different from what it is at the present time. We were still under the influence of the teaching of Sir James Paget.

In the last edition of his book on pathology which he himself edited ('Lectures on Surgical Pathology,' 1853, p. 452), Sir James Paget pressed it very hard indeed that rodent ulcer was not itself truly cancerous, but only allied to cancer.

He distinguished rodent ulcer from the ordinary skin cancer, and says, "I have examined very carefully six of these ulcers, removed by excision, and have never seen in or near them a structure resembling those of epithelial or any other form of cancer. . . . Thus the anatomical distinction between this disease and cancer is evident, and they are equally different in pathology; the rodent ulcer, so far as it has yet been observed, is never attended by similar disease in the lymphatics or any other part, and if completely removed or destroyed it does not recur."

One wonders very much that such an observer should have overlooked the microscopic structure of rodent ulcer so much as not to find any structural resemblance to cancer.

But I feel sure he looked to find the characteristic structure of epithelioma. The blocks of cells which are common in rodent cancer I suspect he took to be altered sebaceous or other cutaneous glands.

Had he recognised the cancerous nature of rodent ulcer,