THE GOUTY EYE

BY

J. AUGUSTUS LEA,
GRAHAMSTOWN, SOUTH AFRICA.

R. J., aet. 57 years. I have seen this patient on several occasions during the last ten years. On each occasion he has been suffering from conjunctivitis, principally bulbar, patchy, with, on some occasions, much sclerotic venous congestion. On each occasion it was one eye only that was affected: sometimes, right, sometimes left. He would complain that the eye felt hot, irritable, and full. He suffers occasionally from attacks of gout. He takes rather large quantities of food, especially animal food, and a moderate amount of spirits, and very little exercise.

In June, 1919, he came to see me again with an irritable right eye and well marked gout in the foot.

On examination with the unassisted eye, the same patchy injection of the bulbar conjunctiva near the limbus was found. On examination with a loupe I found that the patches were continued over the cornea by numerous closely packed minute vessels running parallel, like a minute fringe, over the cornea for about 3 or 4 mm. The patch of cornea in the neighbourhood of this fringe looked irregular, although not raised into distinct vesicles, but appeared as if there was fluid underneath the superficial layer. This did not stain with fluorescein. Five days afterwards the congestion at the limbus had subsided, but irregular grey dots could be seen where the surface of the cornea had been raised. These grey dots disappeared in a few days.

I have also notes of the case of a lady who suffers from occasional slight attacks of gout. On one occasion my notes say: Redness and pain in the left eye, patch of redness near cornea, conjunctival vessels running over edge of cornea; which at this point is swollen and appears irregular and crinkled.

Remarks.—These cases of gouty inflammation of the eye are described in text books under the names of "Episcleritis," "Hot Eye," Subconjunctivitis, and Episcleritis fugax.

I think that the term episcleritis should be reserved for the cases of inflammation which occur generally at some distance from the cornea over insertion of a muscle. These cases, in my experience, are generally connected with rheumatism.

The ordinary "Hot Eye" is, in my experience, a subconjunctivitis near the corneal margin, which occasionally becomes a superficial marginal keratitis, the conjunctival vessels passing over margin of cornea—and is usually a gouty disease—which I think is fairly well shown by the fact that many cases have well marked gout in the feet, and are at once relieved by colchicum.