

touch. This structure is particularly conspicuous on those parts of the skin which are more especially appropriated to this sense, such as the tips of the fingers, the tongue, and the lips: in other parts of the surface, which are endowed with less sensibility, the papillæ are scarcely visible, even with the aid of the microscope.

The surface of the corium is exquisitely sensible to all irritations, whether proceeding from the contact of foreign bodies, or from the impression of atmospheric air. This extreme sensibility of the corium would be a source of constant torment, were it not defended by the cuticle, which is unprovided with either blood vessels or nerves, and is, therefore, wholly insensible. For the same reason, also, it is little liable to change, and is thus, in both respects, admirably calculated to afford protection to the finely organized corium.

Although the cuticle exhibits no traces of vascularity, it is by no means to be regarded as a dead or inorganic substance, like the shells of the mollusca. That it is still part of the living system is proved by the changes it frequently undergoes, both in the natural and the diseased conditions of the body. It is perpetually, though slowly, undergoing decay and renovation; its external surface drying off in minute scales, and in some animals peeling off in large portions. When any part of the human skin is scraped with a knife, a gray dust is detached from it, which is found to consist of minute scales.

By repeated friction, or pressure of any part of the skin, the cuticle soon acquires an increase of thickness and of hardness; this is observable in the soles of the feet, and palms of the hands, and in the fingers of those who make much use of them in laborious work. But this greater thickness in the parts designed by nature to suffer considerable pressure, is not entirely the effect of education; for the cuticle, which exists before birth, is found even then to be much thicker on the soles of the feet, and palms of the hands, than on other parts. This example of provident care in origi-