

ORF



“Sheep in a Winter Landscape” oil on panel, c.1860, Thomas Sidney Cooper.

CHAPTER XXI: TROUBLES IN THE FOLD - A MESSAGE

...Tall came into the enclosure, and leapt off, his face tragic as Morton’s after the battle of Shrewsbury.

“Well?” said Bathsheba, unwilling to believe that her verbal lettre-de-cachet could possibly have miscarried.

“He says beggars mustn’t be choosers,” replied Laban.

“What!” said the young farmer, opening her eyes and drawing in her breath for an outburst.

Joseph Poorgrass retired a few steps behind a hurdle.

'He says he shall not come unless you request en to come civilly and in a proper manner, as becomes any woman begging a favour.'

"Oh, oh, that's his answer! Where does he get his airs? Who am I, then, to be treated like that? Shall I beg to a man who has begged to me?"

Another of the flock sprang into the air, and fell dead.

The men looked grave, as if they suppressed opinion.

Bathsheba turned aside, her eyes full of tears. The strait she was in through pride and shrewishness could not be disguised longer: she burst out crying bitterly; they all saw it; and she attempted no further concealment.

"I wouldn't cry about it, miss," said William Smallbury, compassionately. "Why not ask him softer like? I'm sure he'd come then. Gable is a true man in that way."

Bathsheba checked her grief and wiped her eyes. "Oh, it is a wicked cruelty to me - it is - it is!" she murmured. "And he drives me to do what I wouldn't; yes, he does! - Tall, come indoors."

After this collapse, not very dignified for the head of an establishment, she went into the house, Tall at her heels. Here she sat down and hastily scribbled a note between the small convulsive sobs of convalescence which follow a fit of crying as a ground-swell follows a storm. The note was none the less polite for being written in a hurry. She held it at a distance, was about to fold it, then added these words at the bottom: -

"Do not desert me, Gabriel!"

CHAPTER LXVI: BEAUTY IN LONELINESS - AFTER ALL

....Bathsheba did not look quite so alarmed as if a cannon had been discharged by her ear, which was what Oak had expected.

"Marrying me! I didn't know it was that you meant," she said, quietly. "Such a thing as that is too absurd - too soon - to think of, by far!"

"Yes; of course, it is too absurd. I don't desire any such thing; I should think that was plain enough by this time. Surely, surely you be the last person in the world I think of marrying. It is too absurd, as you say".

"Too.....s-s-soon, were the words I used".

"I must beg your pardon for correcting you, but you said, "too absurd", and so do I".

"I beg your pardon too!" she returned, with tears in her eyes. "Too soon' was what I said. But it doesn't matter a bit - not at all - but I only meant, 'too soon. "Indeed, I didn't, Mr. Oak, and you must believe me!"

Gabriel looked her long in the face, but the firelight being faint there was not much to be seen. "Bathsheba", he said, tenderly and in surprise, and coming closer: "if I only knew one thing - whether you would allow me to love you and win you, and marry you after all - if I only knew that!"

"But you never will know", she murmured.

"Why?"

"Because you never ask".

"Oh - Oh!" said Gabriel, with a low laugh of joyousness. "My own dear - "

"You ought not to have sent me that harsh letter this morning," she interrupted. "It shows you didn't care a bit about me, and were ready to desert me like all the rest of them! It was very cruel of you, considering I was the first sweetheart that you ever had, and you were the first I ever had; and I shall not forget it!"

"Now, Bathsheba, was ever anybody so provoking", he said, laughing. "You know it was purely that I, as an unmarried man, carrying on a business for you as a very taking young woman, had a proper hard part to play - more particular that people knew I had a sort of feeling for 'ee; and I fancied, from the way we were mentioned together, that it might injure your good name. Nobody knows the heat and fret I have been caused by it".

"And was that all?"

"All".

"Oh, how glad I am I came!" she exclaimed, thankfully, as she rose from her seat.

"I have thought so much more of you since I fancied you did not want even to see me again. But I must be going now, or I shall be missed. Why Gabriel", she said, with a slight laugh, as they went to the door, "it seems exactly as if I had come courting you - how dreadful!"

"And quite right too", said Oak. "I've danced at your skittish heels, my beautiful Bathsheba, for many a long mile, and many a long day; and it is hard to begrudge me this one visit".

He accompanied her up the hill, explaining to her the details of his forthcoming tenure of the other farm. They spoke very little of their mutual feeling; pretty phrases and warm expressions being probably unnecessary between such tried friends. Theirs was that substantial affection which arises (if any arises at all) when the two who are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on, the romance growing up in the interstices of a mass of hard prosaic

reality. This good-fellowship - camaraderie - usually occurring through similarity of pursuits, is unfortunately seldom superadded to love between the sexes, because men and women associate, not in their labours, but in their pleasures merely. Where, however, happy circumstance permits its development, the compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is strong as death - that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam

Thomas Hardy, "Far from the Madding Crowd", 1874

Gabriel Oak, secretly in love with Bathsheba, but rejected by her, overcomes his pride and does the gallant gesture - he saves Bathsheba's flock of sheep from the terrible bloat disease, but only after Bathsheba herself has overcome her haughty pride and begged his urgent assistance! Throughout Thomas Hardy's novel, a great tension exists between the two from the outset - but as the years progress, their long common history together enable each to see beyond the others' "rougher sides". Gabriel was always in love with Bathsheba - but she thought him "beneath her" - much preferring a dashing young soldier and then an older gentleman squire. These relationships however end in disaster, and in the ashes of her life, she finally recognizes her one true love - Gabriel. They get married and live happily ever after!

Hardy makes the strong point in his timeless novel "Far From the Madding Crowd" of what a powerful force shared adversity can be when it comes to blossoming love. For the two of them the shared crisis of the imminent loss of Bathsheba's livelihood, broke the shackles of pride -it was the book's pivotal moment, - that launched the centrifugal motion, that would eventually lead to perpetual bliss! The gallant farmhand Gabriel Oak, won the heart of the most beautiful woman in the district due to his heroic efforts in saving her flock - and not to mention - exposing himself to a potentially nasty dose of the Orf!



Gabriel Oak, (Alan Bates) comes to the rescue of his secret love, Bathsheba (Julie Christie); in "Far From the Madding Crowd", MGM 1967.

ORF

Introduction

Orf is zoonotic viral infection of the skin which is usually contracted from **sheep** or **goats**.

It is also known to Veterinarians as “**Sheep pox**” or “**Scabby mouth**”.

Uncomplicated disease is usually mild and self-limiting, resolving within 6 weeks.

Diagnosis is confirmed by PCR testing of fluid from lesions

There is no specific treatment

Disease may be more severe in immunocompromised patients

Organism

- **Orf virus** which is a species of the genus Parapoxvirus genus and of the family Poxviridae.

Epidemiology

- Orf is endemic to most regions of the world.
- It is most commonly among sheep farmers, shearers, freezing workers, vets and farmers’ wives or their children who bottle-feed lambs.
- Children may also acquire it from playing on infected pasture.
- Butchers, meat porters and housewives are sometimes infected from carcasses, especially sheep heads.

A similar condition, caused by a related virus, occurs in dairy farmers and is called Milkers’ Nodule.

Transmission

- Human lesions are caused by direct inoculation of infected material from an **infected animal**.
- Person-to person spread is very uncommon.

Incubation Period

- The incubation period is around 5 - 6 days.

Reservoir

- Orf infects mainly young lambs and goats that contract the infection from one another or possibly from persistence of the virus in pastures.
- The virus is highly contagious amongst small ruminant animals such as sheep and goats.

Clinical Features



Left: Orf single lesion. Right: Orf multiple lesions, (DermNet NZ)

Initially a small, firm, red or reddish-blue lump enlarges to form a flat-topped, blood-tinged pustule or blister.

The fully developed lesion is usually 2 - 3 cm in diameter but may enlarge to as much as 5 cm.

Characteristically, although there appears to be pus under the white skin, incising this will reveal firm, red tissue underneath.

The orf lesion can be pruritic during the early stages and is often tender.

Orf lesions are most commonly solitary or only a few in number.

They occur most commonly on the:

- Fingers and hands
- Forearms

Less commonly they can appear on the face via auto-inoculation

There may be some associated lymphangitis with associated enlargement of the locally draining lymph nodes.

There may be a mild fever.

Uncomplicated disease is usually mild and self-limiting, resolving within 6 weeks, without any long term scarring.

Complications:

These can include:

- Secondary bacterial infection
- Rarely widespread small blisters may occur, suggesting haematogenous spread of the orf virus, but these will usually resolve after a few weeks.
- Immunosuppressed patients may develop larger and more numerous lesions and far more protracted disease.
- A secondary allergic type rash to the presence of the orf virus, erythema multiforme, occasionally develops, typically 10-14 days after the onset of orf, to give small blistering red ring-like lesions on the arms and legs.
- Less distinctive generalized red rashes, (“toxic erythemas”) may also occur and very rarely the blistering disorder pemphigoid, may be seen

Differential diagnoses

These can include

- Other zoonotic diseases that may give rise to similar looking skin lesions, including:
 - ♥ Milker’s nodules
 - ♥ Cowpox
 - ♥ Mycobacterium marinum (fish tank granuloma)
 - ♥ Cutaneous anthrax
- Herpetic whitlow
- Impetigo
- Pyogenic granuloma

Investigations

PCR Testing:

- PCR testing of fluid obtained from a lesion will confirm the diagnosis of orf.

- It can also rule out herpes virus infection

Management

Uncomplicated orf usually self-resolves with 6 weeks

No specific treatment is necessary in most cases.

The lesion(s) may be covered with simple dressings to prevent contaminating the environment or other people, (although person-to person spread is very uncommon).

Any secondary bacterial infection should be treated.

Topical antiseptic agents may be used to prevent secondary bacterial infection.

Imiquimod cream has been reported to be effective in a few cases of orf. ¹ Imiquimod is an immune response modifier that works by stimulating the immune system to release cytokines, important in fighting viruses and cancer cells.

Surgical treatments for larger lesions have included:

- Curettage and electrodesiccation
- Shave excision

References

1. Orf: from the New Zealand Dermatological Society:

- dermnetnz.org/

Dr J. Hayes
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