

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH RADIUM*

BY DR. W. H. B. AIKINS, TORONTO.

When asked by the Committee on Papers to present something on radium before this meeting of the Canadian Medical Association, I was at first at a loss to know just what aspect of the subject to approach. Radium therapeutics have been very much to the front during the last few years, and the papers in the various medical journals have been numerous. I have thought, however, that I could not do better than collaborate my results as I have experienced them during the five years that I have used this substance therapeutically, and therefrom draw conclusions which indicate just what role radium is playing as a therapeutic agent in modern medicine.

May I briefly recall to your mind that it is only a few years since this element was isolated by Prof. and Mme. Curie in Paris; that its action on the tissues of the body was not noted until 1901, some time after its discovery, and that it was only in 1905 that the first systematic attempt was made to study its action by the founding of the Paris Radium Institute under the charge of the late Dr. Louis Wickham.

It was in Paris that I first had the opportunity to see the results of the use of radium, and I saw them for three years in succession before I was tempted to invest in a small quantity of the precious metal. With this small plaque I had such remarkable success in the treatment of rodent ulcer in patients, which several of my colleagues were good enough to send me, that to my mind at least radium as a therapeutic agent had come to stay. Gradually further quantities have been added to the armamentarium, so that lesions can now be treated which at first were quite out of the question.

Altogether I have to date (June, 1914) records of 387 cases treated with radium. I am free to confess that the results in all these cases were not what was hoped for. There are certain types of malignant growths, which I would hesitate to take and do refuse now, over and over again, for which at first I tried to do something. On the other hand, there have been results which have surprised me, and improvement has sometimes been noted when none was expected. The point comes in here as to whether

* Read at the meeting of the Canadian Medical Association, St. John, N.B., July, 1914.