

THE GOLD PREPARATIONS IN SOME SKIN DISEASES AND SYPHILIS.

A. H. OHMANN-DUMESNIL, A. M., M. D.

Professor of Dermatology and Syphology in the Marion Sims College of Medicine, St. Louis; Consulting Dermatologist to the St. Louis City and Female Hospitals; Dermatologist to the Alexian Brothers Hospital, Plus Hospital, Rebeckah Hospital, etc.

There are so many preparations of a novel nature, or which are merely revivals of old ones in a new form, being daily offered to the medical practitioner that he is often at loss whether to use any of them. Not content with the inherent qualities of these preparations, their promoters either vaunt them as universal panaceas or construct the reading matter so clumsily that one naturally inclined to test the efficacy of the drugs calmly puts them aside until such evidence is forthcoming as will prove convincing and be clearly set forth. It is for this reason that clinical experience is so valuable when based upon careful observation and a knowledge of the conditions present.

Our knowledge of the therapeutical action of gold has, up to within a few years, been based upon the hypothetical dicta of the alchemists. Gradually the matter was taken up again, at first by the Arabian physicians and afterwards in Europe. Once more it fell into disuse, and was rescued from oblivion by Hahnemann, who introduced it in his pharmacopœia. However, this did not give it much of an impulse, and it is only of late years that this metal has undergone any serious investigation concerning its therapeutical properties. Among American investigators Bartholow, Heneage Gibbs, and Shurley are the most prominent. Dr. Shtcherbok has made thorough investigations also.

The most active salt of gold is the bromide, and it is particularly so upon the nervous structure, but small doses being necessary to produce effects. The action of gold is essentially that of an alterative. It has no cumulative effect; but when toxic doses are administered, mental excitement, amounting to delirium at times, manifests itself. A prominent symptom of its excessive action is an excessive flow of saliva, the so-called *aurism*. Remembering this in connection with the fact that very small doses produce

the effects of the remedy, more especially in the form of the bromide, some care should be exercised in its administration. Among the therapeutic effects of gold may be noted the fact that it is tonic, more especially to the nervous system, and this accounts for the fact that it is an aphrodisiac of no mean power. It was highly esteemed many years ago as an anti-syphilitic, and recent experience confirms this view, more especially in the later forms of the disease.

The cutaneous troubles in which I have had occasion to employ the gold preparations to any extent are limited. In acne and eczema of a subacute or chronic character I have found arsenauo an invaluable adjuvant. On the other hand, in chronic eczema and in the later manifestations of syphilis, mercauro has proved itself almost a specific so much so that its administration was always attended by marked improvement, which ceased as soon as it was discontinued. This was what attracted my attention to the gold preparations, and in investigating their therapeutical properties I have been impressed by the fact that the most active as well as most efficient salt of gold is the bromide. It not only acts powerfully when administered alone, but seems to increase the therapeutic effects of arsenic and of mercury, and for that reason much smaller doses of these agents may be given, better results obtained, and, at the same time security from toxic effects will be secured. These are the qualities which recommend the preparations mentioned above, which are true chemical combinations and not empirical mixtures.

It may not be inappropriate to mention a few cases from practice illustrative of the good effects of gold preparations in diseases of the skin and in syphilis.

CASE I.—Miss F. B., a dark blonde of seventeen years, has been suffering from a marked pustular acne for two years. She is very nervous in disposition. Vlemingx's lotion ordered applied at night, and resorcin ointment every morning. In addition, the pustules were emptied thoroughly every day. Some little improvement showed itself, but it was not stable. A "nervous" attack would cause the eruption to mani-