

## COCAINE IN SURGERY.

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**R**EGARDED by the Peruvians for centuries with superstitious veneration, sacrificed in the time of the Incas to the sun, used by the Mexicans before the arrival of the Spaniards as a substitute for money, few drugs have as remarkable and interesting a history as coca erythroxylon.

It is one of the few drugs in which the surgeon, rather than the physician, is interested.

The alkaloid cocaine was known for years before Koller, in 1884, immortalized himself by demonstrating, before the Ophthalmological Congress in session at Heidelberg, the value of cocaine in operations upon the eye, making the first practical application of the knowledge. For its application to the needs of the general surgeon, we are mainly indebted to Dr. J. L. Corning, of New York.

The enthusiasm with which the drug was at first received soon gave way to a wiser caution, aroused by frequent mishaps following its use, until to-day many good surgeons entertain the extreme view, which would condemn the use of cocaine at all. This, we think, should be deprecated, because the drug may be employed with both safety and satisfaction, if the precautions which we shall have occasion to mention be adopted.

In defending the employment of the drug, we feel under some obligation to preface that defence with a statement of the risks incurred.

First, we have that unknown quantity, idiosyncrasy, which must account for those rare fatalities, occurring in the practices of the cautious and experienced.

Children under ten years of age, and adults of neurotic temperament, are very intolerant of the drug.

When employed as an application, or injected in the tissues of the head or neck, small doses, comparatively, develop toxic symptoms. The same may be said of its action upon the genito-urinary tract.

In addition, we would suggest that one, or at the most two, per cent. solutions be used when injected, it being safer to inject two drams of a one per cent. solution than half a dram of a four per cent. solution.