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THE USE OF RADIUM IN THE TREATMENT OF CANCER AND OTHER DISEASES*

SELECTIVE ACTION OF RADIUM

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As a rule, when speaking to a general practitioner about radium as a means of curing diseases, I find that in his mind arise three ideas:

1. The idea of a burn.
2. The idea of an action only on the skin.
3. The idea of an action localized on a small area.

These opinions are right, but only to a very limited extent. Certainly radium can act on the surface as a caustic and on a small area, and in so doing radium is interesting, because the burning is produced without pain, the degree of destruction can be controlled, and the newly formed tissues are often, after a burn, smooth, supple, and with the exception of telangiectasis, sometimes very satisfactory.

I will explain further on how radium acts as a caustic, but this is not the only aim, the chief aim, of my lecture to-day. If the influence of radium ended there, it would not be worthy of the special consideration which must be given to it, because we possess a good number of other destructive agents.

I will endeavor to demonstrate, taking great care not to fall into exaggeration,

* Abstracted from a lecture-demonstration given before the Academy of Medicine, Toronto, Sept. 30, 1910.