DERMATOLOGY

ARSENIC IN DISEASES OF THE SKIN.

(M. B. Hartzell, *Journal A. M. A.*, October 31, 1908, p. 1428.)

He reviews its therapeutic history from the time of Dr. Girdlestone, 1806, to the present day, and concludes the introduction by stating that its use at present is very much restricted compared to that of fifty years ago.

Eczema.—Arsenic is never to be used in the acute inflammatory conditions of the skin, as it usually acts harmfully, which contraindicates its use in acute eczema. If it is ever to be used at all in eczema, it is only in the chronic papulo-squamous case with an anemic skin and dry hair. Hartzell, although having tried it in many cases, does not recall a single instance in which it seemed to be of the slightest benefit.

Psoriasis.—In this disease dermatologists are practically of one mind in attributing more or less efficiency to arsenic. But it is not adapted to the treatment of every case, and will be disappointing if the cases are not well selected. It should not be given when the eruption is acute and hyperemic and spreading, for it increases the discomfort of the patient and increases the eruption. It should not be given to old cases upon whom arsenic has been used.

Lichen Planus.—It does not occupy so prominent a place in lichen planus as it does in psoriasis, although the Vienna dermatologists think it is the most valuable of the internal remedies for lichen planus. Stelwagon says it is of special value in some cases, while Crocker seldom uses it. Hartzell thinks it is the most reliable remedy for chronic lichen in limited areas or patches, but does not think it is indicated where a greater part of the skin is involved.

Pemphigus.—Arsenic is considered one of the most useful, if not the most useful, internal remedy in this malady.

Dermatitis Herpetiformis.—Much the same may be said about arsenic in this disease as in pemphigus.

Sarcoma of the Skin.—There is considerable evidence to show that arsenic, especially when used hypodermatically, is sometimes useful in sarcoma of the skin, particularly in the idiopathic multiple hemorrhagic sarcoma of Kaposi.

With reference to the relative value of the different arsenical preparations, Hartzell states that he has not found in his experience that sodium cacodylate and atoxyl by the mouth have any advantage over the other forms of arsenic. However, owing to the great solubility of atoxyl in water and its freedom from irritant properties, it is especially adopted to hypodermic use.

THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF ECZEMA.

(M. B. Hartzell, M.D., Philadelphia, *Journal A. M. A.*, November 28, 1908, p. 1828.)

The main point in the discussion in the paper was the question as to whether eczema should be considered to be due to external or internal causes. The author, after reviewing the literature and teachings upon the causation of the disease from the time of Thomas Bateman, 1815, to the present time, is inclined to think that it is generally due to some external cause, however, he does not deny that it may sometimes, or in some cases, be due to internal causes, and he thinks that those cases due to internal causes are in a great minority. He emphasizes the statement, "that our knowledge of the internal causes is extremely shadowy and ill-defined, seldom sufficiently accurate to afford a rational basis for internal treatment."

He is inclined to think that infantile eczema is due to external causes.