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VLEMINCKX'S SOLUTION IN ACNE ROSACEA.*

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The condition known as acne rosacea, or rosacea, is so obstinate in its nature that in many instances almost every remedy is barren of any marked or permanent result. What will prove useful in a certain proportion of cases, will be of little avail, or even absolutely valueless, in others. The importance, then, of having at command a large choice of remedies is evident. Remedies are referred to here in the sense of local applications only, as it is generally by such means alone that any good is obtained. Internal medication is rarely of advantage, and is seldom called for, except to correct faulty conditions in the general health that may be present. The use of Vleminckx's solution in this affection is not original with myself, as it has been, to my knowledge, so used by Dr. Duhring and Dr. Van Harlingen, as well as by other dermatologists. This application of it is, however, but little known to the general profession, and it is for the purpose of calling further attention to its value that the present communication is written.

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The solution is made by adding one part of lime and two parts of sublimed sulphur, or flowers of sulphur, to twenty parts of water. This is boiled down to about twelve parts, cooled, and then filtered. The result is a dark, orange-yellow colored liquid, with a strong odor of sulphuretted hydrogen. This is to be diluted as circumstances require. A brief description of a few cases will illustrate its value and mode of application.

CASE I.—Albert B., a druggist, aged 19, applied at the Philadelphia Dispensary for Skin Diseases, January 2, 1882. The nose was erythematous, and, with the surrounding parts, presented a few acne pustules and numerous comedones. Health was fair, with occasional attacks of indigestion. He was ordered to make applications of hot water to the parts at bedtime, subsequently press out as many comedones as possible, and then apply for several minutes a lotion made up of one part of Vleminckx's solution to five of water. In addition, he was prescribed an aperient mixture to be used when required. He returned at intervals of ten days, and the proportion of Vleminckx's solution was gradually increased from one part to three. Improvement ensued from the start, and at the end of two months the patient was so well satisfied that he ceased his visits.

CASE II.—Morris F., peddler, aged 40, applied at Philadelphia Dispensary for Skin Diseases, February 2, 1882. Nose and immediate neighborhood and forehead near middle were markedly erythematous, and presented a number of small acne papules and pustules. About the nose the capillaries were enlarged. Had indulged some years previously in alcoholic excess, but during the past few years had been temperate. Disease had existed three years. General health good. An aperient was ordered to

be used occasionally, and at bedtime to apply, for several minutes, a lotion of one part of Vleminckx's solution to four of water. Patient returned in three weeks somewhat improved. Strength of lotion was gradually increased to one part to three. From this time on, patient continued to improve steadily, without further increasing strength of wash. At each visit, the larger capillaries were incised. Last visit was made April 24, about three months after beginning treatment. Patient was well satisfied with the improvement in his appearance, and, although not absolutely well, failed to return.

CASE III.—Jane M., aged 36, domestic, presented herself for treatment at the service of the Northern Dispensary, March 11, 1882. Chin, nose, and middle of forehead dull red, and covered irregularly with acne pustules; enlarged capillaries about nose. Health was good, and the functions well performed, except that there were occasional attacks of indigestion. An aperient tonic mixture was ordered for the dyspeptic symptoms, and a lotion of one part of Vleminckx's solution to five of water, to be applied for several minutes every evening. Patient returned three weeks later, and condition had much improved; same was continued. At end of two weeks, patient again appeared, and marked improvement was noted. The acne had almost entirely disappeared, and the rosacea was less marked. The larger vessels were incised. Lotion was increased one part to four, and later, one to three. Improvement continued, and three months after her first visit, patient was completely rid of her trouble.

Examples such as are just cited, might be multiplied, as the disease is a rather common one at the dispensaries, and the record-books contain a number of such cases, showing the value of this remedy, and I may here add, also a proportion of failures. In

some cases, it is necessary to gradually increase the strength of the lotion, even up to the pure solution. This is, however, rare. The strengths as given in the above cases are generally sufficient. At times it is well to intermit treatment for a few days, in order that the desquamation it usually causes may disappear. The milder strengths cause very little desquamation, and, in moderate cases, are sufficiently efficacious. Occasionally, especially in the more obstinate cases, the lotion may be advantageously made stronger. In most cases, the improvement would be more rapid were the lotion applied twice daily, night and morning. It is difficult, however, to get patients to make applications early in the day, on account of personal appearance. The severe forms of the disease, those in which hypertrophy is a marked feature, are comparatively rare, and as yet I have had no opportunity of testing the solution in such cases. It would probably be of little value, as the disease, when so advanced, is rarely benefited by any treatment, except those plans in which operative measures figure prominently.

Even in the moderate forms, some cases fail to respond to the application of the solution, and other treatment must be instituted, in order to cause improvement. Vleminckx's solution is not, therefore, in any sense, a specific—far from it. It frequently fails and disappoints. Upon the whole, however, according to my experience, it is, for the milder forms of the affection, the most reliable single remedy.