



Eagle or Dove?

**B**OTANISTS' Latin and common English disagree over the columbine. To be sure, the common English name of this beautiful flower is not English. It comes from the Latin also, from *columba*, the Romans' word for dove. There is supposed to be something suggestive, in the appearance of the clustered tops of the conical petals, either of five doves in a nest or of a similar group clustered around a dish. The latter was a favorite motif in later Roman art.

The Latin name for the columbine is *Aquilegia*. It is commonly stated that this is derived from *aquila* (eagle), being a supposed reference to the five "claws" or spurs in which the petals end. To be sure, the eagle, like most birds, has but four claws—but what's an extra claw to a neat floral fancy?

However, botanists are not all agreed that the columbine borrowed its name from the eagle. In Bailey's *Cyclopedia of Horticulture* the flat declaration is made, that the name is "from *aquilegus*, water-drawer, not from *aquila*, eagle." Gray's *Manual*, the botanists' old standby, is more non-committal, stating merely, "Name of doubtful origin."

There are about 50 species of columbine, well distributed around the Northern Hemisphere. The United States has its fair share of exceptionally beautiful ones. Throughout the entire northeastern quarter of the country there is but one species, the sturdy but graceful orange-red Canada columbine. In the West, however, the species are more numerous and varied. Notable are the Colorado columbine, blue, with amazingly long spurs, and the smaller, clear-yellow species found farther north, in and around Yellowstone National Park.

The short-spurred blue, white and red varieties grown in gardens are all color

phases of common European columbine. Until a generation or so ago, this exotic was the only columbine cultivated in this country. Now, however, several of the fine native species have found their way into popular acceptance.

One strong point in favor of colum-

bines, particularly of the native American species, is their ability to thrive in partial shade, so that they make highly desirable flowers for interplanting among shrubbery. They like a rich, loose soil, well moistened but well aerated.

*Science News Letter, May 18, 1940*

MEDICINE

## Chemical Cures With Gold Remedies May Be on Way

**G**OLD is joining the ranks of arsenic and sulfur as chemicals that cure.

A single injection of a gold compound, called gold sodium thiomalate or myochrysin, will protect mice against rapidly fatal doses of the germ, *Streptobacillus moniliformis*, when two other chemical remedies, the syphilis cure, neoarsphenamine, and the pneumonia remedy, sulfapyridine, are ineffective, Dr. Fordyce R. Heilman, of the Mayo Clinic, reports. (*Science*, April 12) This germ has been incriminated as the cause of some cases of rat bite fever.

The fatal ailment for which the gold compound was found so effective was, to be sure, an experimental disease in mice. Sulfanilamide, however, first proved its worth in protecting mice against germ infection.

The same gold compound that cured mice of the experimental streptobacillus infection has been used in treating human arthritis patients. A favorable response in 94 out of 100 patients has been reported by one group of physicians

using this treatment and other doctors, especially in England and on the Continent, have been well impressed with results of gold treatment of arthritis.

Serious drawback to this treatment is the danger of liver and kidney damage and blood and skin diseases, some of which end fatally. The case at present for and against gold compounds in treating arthritis is summed up by Drs. H. M. Margolis and V. W. Eisenstein, of Pittsburgh, in a report to the American Medical Association: (*Journal*, April 13).

"Gold salts offer a promising, but at present dangerous, adjunct to the armamentarium of the practitioner."

With the present tremendous interest in chemical curing of disease, and with scientists in a number of institutions already working on gold remedies, it is reasonable to suppose that a way may be found for safe treatment of some ailments with remedies of gold, as well as with remedies from sulfur and arsenic.

*Science News Letter, May 18, 1940*

---

The advertisement on the opposite page was published in the January 27 edition of *EDITOR & PUBLISHER*, the weekly magazine of the journalistic profession.

Not only the *NEW YORK TIMES* but 147 other newspapers in the United States and Canada publish scientific news and feature material distributed by *SCIENCE SERVICE*. And there are other excellent foreign papers beside the *SYDNEY SUN* and *HELSINKI SANOMAT* on our client list.

Our work as a newspaper syndicate enables us to give *SCIENCE NEWS LETTER* the briskness and freshness so desirable in a news magazine. And our work as a magazine publisher helps keep us in touch with many sources of scientific news that should be projected through newspapers to the man in the street.

As a subscriber to *SCIENCE NEWS LETTER* you are our partner in this useful work. If you'd like to make your partnership more active, you might be willing to do something like this: If your local newspaper reports news of science in a manner you consider less than satisfactory, suggest to the editor that he use reports "By *SCIENCE SERVICE*".

Watson Davis