

CANADA

# Medical and Surgical Journal.

MONTREAL, APRIL, 1884.

## THE TREATMENT OF DIPHTHERIA.

If any proof were needed of our feebleness in dealing with diphtheria, it would be found in the great number and variety of the medicinal agents that are being constantly recommended for the treatment of this disease. Seldom a year passes without the publication of a new "specific." The latest agent that is confidently said to possess this power is corrosive sublimate. It is recommended to be applied locally, and used also internally. Locally, it is applied in the strength from  $\frac{1}{1000}$  to  $\frac{1}{500}$ . Internally, it is administered in the usual doses. Judging from the marked antiseptic properties possessed by this mercurial compound, it would appear, if the prevailing notions on the pathology of the disease are correct, to be the agent, above all others, that would be likely to do good. From recent experimental investigations, it has been abundantly demonstrated that of all our antiseptics, corrosive sublimate is the one which is the most powerful and at the same time freest from untoward effects. This only applies, however, to its power in destroying the micro-organisms of putrefaction, and not to the power that it may possess over the "micrococcus" of diphtheria. Although it has not been as yet proved, it is highly probable that diphtheria is due to the deposition in the affected tissues (mucous membranes) of a micro-organism; that the disease is, in the first place, a local one, and that its constitutional effects are secondary to the local changes which take place in the mucous membranes, and to the absorption into the blood of the micro-organism. Even if this view of the nature of the disease be the correct one, and even if corrosive sublimate proves to be our most powerful manageable antiseptic,