

The Canadian Practitioner and Review.

Vol. XXXIV. TORONTO, DECEMBER, 1909.

No. 12

Original Communications.

RADIUM AND ITS ACTION IN CONNECTION WITH CERTAIN DISEASES OF THE SKIN.*

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Radium was discovered in Paris in 1898 by Prof. Pierre Curie and Mme. Sklodowska Curie in collaboration with M. Bemont.

In 1901 the action of radium was made manifest by a curious accident to M. Becquerel, who imprudently carried a small tube containing radium in his vest pocket for several hours. Fourteen days later the skin lying beneath the pocket where the radium had been resting was found to be in an acute state of inflammation, and M. Besmir attributed it to the action of the radium.

P. Curie then made a voluntary experiment on himself, and the experience was conclusive as to the burning action of the radium on the skin, and thinking that it would be found that the properties of radium had a distinct medical application he confided a sample to M. Danlos, physician to the St. Louis Hospital. This was the point of departure into a new branch of physiotherapy, and to-day the qualities of radium as a valuable therapeutic agent are fully established.¹

As a result of earnest work and careful researches carried on with much patience by Dr. Louis Wickham, a trained scientist, a dermatologist of great note, physician to St. Lazare Hospital, Paris, and also at the surgical clinics of M. Cazin and M. Banzet, the Laboratory for Radium in Paris was established in 1905.

There are many workers who had been using radium before the establishment of this Laboratory, but a new era dawned when Dr. Wickham took charge of the work and brought his

* Read at meeting of the Section of Medicine, Academy of Medicine, Toronto, November 9th, 1909.