

Montreal Medical Journal.

VOL. XIX.

OCTOBER, 1890.

No. 4.

ETHER INEBRITY.

For a period of nearly fifty years the use of ether as an intoxicant has been common in certain parts of Ireland. Lately it is said this practice has extended to England and Scotland, and in some parts has reached alarming proportions. A leading article in a recent number of the *Lancet* directs special attention to the injuries, immediate and remote, following this method of intoxication. The writer gives an account of an ether-drinking scene witnessed in Ulster. The ether was served out in wine-glasses. The drinker first washed out his mouth with a draught of cold water, and after that tossed off a wine-glassful of ether "nate," as it was said, drinking it quickly, almost at a gulp. Both men and women took part in this indulgence, and were speedily brought into a state of intoxication, more or less complete. The practice of ether drinking in Ireland dates from the time of Mathew. This great temperance reformer succeeded in convincing several million Irishmen that whiskey drinking was very injurious, but his good works were in the majority of cases of short duration. Ether being recommended by a few as a stimulant, which caused exhilaration but not intoxication, the people naturally were not slow to test its powers, and with the result that at the present time there are a great number of confirmed ether inebriates.

The character of ether intoxication differs considerably from that of alcohol. The preliminary period of excitement is more marked, but shorter in duration. If the quantity taken is sufficiently large, the stupor state, although brief, is profound, and may prove fatal. Owing to its being rapidly eliminated,