

THE
Montreal Medical Journal.

VOL. XX.

MARCH, 1892.

No. 9.

THE THERAPEUTICS OF ICHTHYOL.

A number of pamphlets received will serve as a text for one or two observations upon Ichthyol. The German experience is given on the authority of Dr. Edgar Kurz, Dr. Kleim, Dr. Muller, and Dr. Hartman; the French by Dr. Stocquart. In English, Dr. Cranstoun Charles relates his trials in the *Lancet*, 26th September, 1891, and in addition Mercks' *Bulletin* devotes a portion of a recent number to this drug. Ichthyol is obtained by distillation of a bituminous quartz, found in the Tyrol, containing fossil fish remains. The only substance so prepared, yields on rectification a colorless green fluorescent body containing about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of sulphur, which when treated with concentrated sulphuric acid yields in turn a new product containing 18 per cent of this element. Combinations with one or other of the caustic alkalies can readily be formed. The ammonium salt is the more common of these and goes by the name of "ichthyol." It is a thick, fatty-looking fluid, with a colour varying from a dark yellow to a brownish black, and possessing a marked bituminous smell and taste. With oils and vaseline it is readily miscible, and is slightly soluble in ether, water and alcohol, but easily soluble in chloroform or in a mixture of ether and alcohol. Ointments can be made with ichthyol and lanoline, zinc ointment and glycerine, varying in strength from 5 to 50 per cent. The ammonium and lithium salts may be given internally in pills containing a grain and a half of the salt or in capsules containing 38 grains; also in the form of an alcoholic ethereal solution containing from 10 to 30 per cent of ichthyol, and an ichthyol soap can often be used with great