

Elementary Anatomy,

AS APPLIED TO NURSING.

By BEDFORD FENWICK, M.D., M.R.C.P.,

Physician to The Hospital for Women.

LECTURE III.

(Continued from page 244.)

EPISTAXIS. This term is used in surgery to denote bleeding from the nose, and is due to various causes. We find some people are habitually prone to hæmorrhage from the nostril on the slightest injury to the nose, or, indeed, without any injury at all. The blood vessels of the mucous membrane of the nostrils are very easily ruptured in any case, and in old people or in those whose vessels are overloaded, it is sometimes nature's method of relief to the vascular system to permit the rupture of one of these vessels and the escape of a certain amount of blood. But in children, after an injury, or in any case in which the flow appears to be excessive, Epistaxis must be checked. In an ordinary case, it is sufficient to lay the patient flat upon his back, and apply a cloth wet with cold water over the bridge of the nose; in other instances, something cold to the nape of the neck is more efficacious, from which has arisen the popular habit of placing a large door key in this position to check the bleeding from the nose. But there are some cases in which this simple method is not sufficient, and in these a remedy can be employed which is usually effectual. The feet and legs of the patient are placed in hot water in which a handful of mustard has been dissolved and are there kept until the skin has become thoroughly reddened. By this means, of course, a certain amount of blood is drawn to the surface of these extremities, and by so much the vessels of the head and nose are relieved. There are some few cases in which this is ineffectual, and in which a surgical measure is necessary to obtain the arrest of the hæmorrhage. The method which is then adopted is to pass a curved instrument through the nostril which bears a string at its end, and which by a simple arrangement can be drawn out through the mouth. A plug of cotton wool is attached to the end thus drawn through the mouth, and traction on the string from the nasal end will draw the plug through the mouth and up into the back of the nostril, thus plugging the posterior nares, and so preventing the passage of blood down the throat. If hæmorrhage then continues from the nostril, this end is also plugged with cotton wool, and the clot which is then formed between the two plugs causes the arrest of the hæmorrhage.

Varicose Veins. These are a frequent cause of

hæmorrhage; in some cases even to a dangerous amount, especially in old people. By long standing, or for other reasons, the veins of the leg and thigh become swollen, enlarged, tortuous, and finally thickened in their walls, a condition which causes considerable pain and inconvenience to the sufferer, and if neglected will probably lead to further changes in the vessels as age advances. It is wise, therefore, for patients who have these enlarged veins to wear elastic stockings or bandages, so as to afford artificial support to the dilated veins; but if the vessels become hard and brittle from thickening, the slightest injury, blow, or kick may cause rupture of the vessel, and consequently more or less profuse hæmorrhage to an extent which might become dangerous unless controlled at once. The treatment is as simple as it is efficacious: pressure must be made upon the bleeding spot with the finger, if nothing else is handy, and as soon as possible a small pad of cotton wool, or lint, soaked in sweet oil for preference, is placed on the wound, and kept in position by a firm bandage. The leg must be raised higher than the rest of the body, and so maintained for five or six days, until the tear in the vessel has had time to heal. Sometimes these varicose veins lead to another condition which is of interest to the Nurse. By the interference with their circulation, the skin surrounding them becomes bluish and liable to break, leaving a wound covered with, what we shall hereafter see are called, granulations; in other words, an *ulcer* is formed, which, from its cause, is termed a varicose ulcer. This is more common in old people than in young, and, from the deficiency in the blood supply of the part, such ulcers are difficult to heal. It will probably be the Nurse's duty to strap and bandage the affected limb regularly and carefully, and it is important to remember that the bandage in such cases should be applied firmly from the foot upwards, so as to prevent swelling of the limb below the part constricted by the strapping. The ulcerated surface must also be kept very clean, in order to afford it the best possible chance of healing.

Another troublesome form of hæmorrhage is that which occasionally follows leech bites, especially when these have been applied to the face or abdomen. Sometimes this occurs to an excessive amount, and although easily stayed by the pressure of a finger, will recur again and again as soon as the pressure is removed. Generally, the best treatment is to apply a small pad of cotton wool, and keep it in position by strapping; and if this is not efficacious, some form of caustic will probably be used, after which the nursing treatment will consist in keeping the resulting wound perfectly clean and free from disturbance.

(To be continued.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)