

Medical Matters.

BLEEDING AND THE BAROMETER.



AN old subject of discussion has recently been revived in a foreign contemporary in the shape of the connection which exists, if any, between attacks of hæmorrhages and barometric pressure. It has often been noted that patients suffer from excessive bleeding more frequently when the barometer stands at an unusually high point than when it is at the ordinary level, and the explanation which has been given is that the pressure of the atmosphere being increased causes an increased pressure on the blood vessels, and therefore a greater liability to their rupture if they are already predisposed to that accident by existing disease. For instance, in cases of Consumption in which the tendency to hæmoptysis is already great, in consequence of the formation of a cavity in the lung, it is contended that the greater blood pressure may be just sufficient to cause the rupture of a vessel. The theory holds equally in cases of ulcer of the stomach, or in various uterine diseases, or, indeed, wherever there is a predisposition to bleeding; and in a large number of cases the theory is undoubtedly exemplified in practice. It is a fact, however, to which less attention has been given, that, when the barometer stands at a very low point, hæmorrhages are also unusually frequent—the presumption being that the blood vessels then rupture because of the diminished pressure on their walls. It is, therefore, a good general rule that when the barometer is very low, as well as when it is very high, patients suffering from the diseases to which allusion has already been made, should be even more carefully watched than at other times, and that even greater rest must then be insisted upon than usual, so as to avoid, if possible, the extra risk of hæmorrhage.

ALCOHOL IN CHILDHOOD.

SOME of the most serious statements which we remember to have seen for a long time, have recently been made in a Moscow periodical by a well known physician. From these it would appear that, in Russia, children are frequently fed to a large extent upon alcohol, and we deeply regret to find it stated that in quite half the number of cases the responsibility for this is referred to medical advice. The author of the article in question states that in four months he made inquiries into the dietary of 1,671 children, aged between one and twelve years, and of these no less than 506, that is to say nearly one-third, were being habitually given larger or smaller quantities of alcohol each day. It is needless to point out that such a fact is eloquent, both of the injury done to the children themselves, and indirectly to all with whom they are associated. The author asserts that at his hospital alcohol is only very rarely employed, although it is given wherever it appears to be urgently needed; and he advises most strongly, not only that alcohol should not be prescribed for children except on the rarest occasions, but also that all medical men should consider it part of their duty to warn parents against the evil results of administering any form of spirits, or even of wine, to young children. It is possible, of course, that the severity of the climate in Moscow may account to some extent for the prevalence of this dreadful habit; but when the dire effects of alcohol on the tissues are remembered, it must be realised that it is almost criminal to give it to children, or even young adults. Closely connected with this subject, and equally deserving of the gravest censure, is the habit which is undoubtedly far too prevalent amongst children's nurses, and even amongst monthly nurses—who ought to know better—of administering soothing syrups to the infants under their charge. It is well known that the basis of all these concoctions is some preparation of opium, and the lives which are sacrificed, to say nothing of the healths which are endangered each year by such criminal carelessness and selfishness, are quite incalculable. In fact, we consider that soothing syrups should be scheduled as most dangerous poisons, and never be sold except upon a medical prescription.

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