TREATMENT OF VARICOSE VEINS BY THE VIENNA CAUSTIC.

By M. Berard, Surgeon to the Necker Hospital.

The want of success which has attended the various means tried for the treatment of varicose veins, induced M. Berard to test the efficacy of a new remedy. M.M. Bonnet and Genoul recommended the caustic potass, but the substance which M. Berard employs is the Vienna caustic.

Whatever be the number or extent of the varicose veins, M. Berard commences with a single application to the parts affected, the limb must be immovable and shaved. The point generally selected is below the knee, over the internal saphena vein, and this even in cases where the varicose state exists above the knee. The caustic should be applied so as to produce a long narrow eschar; this allows us to destroy the coats of the vessel to a greater extent, and gives rise to a more easily managed wound than the circular eschar. On the evening which precedes the application of the caustic, the patient should be made to stand upright for some time, in order to render the veins clearly discernible, and a line must then be traced with ink or nitrate of silver, to circumscribe the parts to which the caustic is to be applied. This done, the skin having been shaved, and the limb placed in a proper position, the paste is applied over the vessel. The length of the layer varies from one inch to one inch ten lines; the breadth, from two and a half to four and a half lines; the thickness is the same as the breadth; the extent of the eschar, however, must vary according to the size of the vessel; its circulations; the period during which the caustic is applied varies from a quarter to half an hour. The object is to destroy at one application the whole of the tissues down to the vein, inclusively, and for this purpose from eighteen to thirty-six convolutions; Should any hemorrhage occur, it is easily arrested by pressure and the horizontal position; the patient, as a precaution, must, in all cases, keep to bed.

When the caustic has been applied so as to destroy the coats of the vein, the blood coagulates at the wounded point in about twenty-four to thirty-six hours; and the coagulation gradually extends to the inferior divisions of the vein. The existence of anastomosis between the superficial and deep veins may retard the coagulation of the blood, and render the necessary application of the caustic inapplicable, or the existence of several varicose branches, or the development of a varicose disposition in one set of veins, while the others are being obliterated, may have the same effect. In such cases we must wait a few weeks before we have recourse to a second operation, because M. Berard has remarked that the newly-dilated veins often return to their normal state. The disadvantage of this mode of treatment is fairly stated by the author; in some cases we are forced to apply the caustic more than once, the pain is occasionally severe, and inflammation may come on, but this very rarely terminates in suppuration. On the other hand, these inconveniences are of rare occurrence, while the method proposed is more simple, and certainly more efficacious, than any other hitherto employed. In one case only, out of more than 500 applications of the caustic, did a fatal result ensue, and here the cause of death was traceable to circumstances which are easily avoided.—Gaz. Med. de Paris, No. 4.

THE BAVARIAN SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE SUSPENDED.

The Home Secretary of State in Bavaria has recently forwarded an ordinance to the three universities of that kingdom, enjoining them to close all the schools of medicine. The motives of this injunction are stated to be the facts that more medical men exist than can find occupation, and there are 700 applications to the minister from young men who seek employment.

BOOKS RECEIVED.


A Practical Treatise on Venerable Diseases; or, Critical and Experimental Researches on Inoculation, applied to the Study of these Affections; with a Therapeutical Summary and Special Formulary. By P. Ricord, M.D. Translated by H. P. Drummond, M.D. London: Longman and Co., 1842. 8vo. pp. 394.

ERRATUM.

In No. 72, page 386, col. 2, line 59, for a whole twelvemonths, read a whole month. The reader is requested to make this correction in Mr. Bulley's case of oesous tumour of the abdomen.

Printed by Samuel Taylor, of 6, Chandos-street, in the parish of St. Paul, London; and sold at his office, No. 6, Chandos street, aforesaid; and published by John Churchill, at his residence, No. 16, Princes-street, in the parish of St. Anne, Westminster.—Friday, February 19, 1842.