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TONSILLOTOMY AND ITS COMPLICATION BY HÆMORRHAGE.*

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A three-fold purpose has induced me to present, at this meeting, certain points regarding tonsillotomy and one of its occasional complications. To give you in brief a history of the case which first directed my attention to this subject, to bring out in discussion some of the experience at present stowed away in the gray matter of the cerebral convolutions of the members of this association, and with such help to reach sound conclusions as to what the treatment of the complications in question should be, have been the objects which I have had in view in the preparation of this paper.

At the last meeting of the American Laryngological Association, its secretary, Dr. George M. Lefferts, of New York, discussed "The Question of Hæmorrhage after Tonsillotomy," and classified its frequency and severity thus:—

- 1st. A fatal hæmorrhage is very rare.
- 2nd. A dangerous hæmorrhage may occur.
- 3rd. A serious one, serious as regards both possible, immediate, and remote results is not very unusual, and
- 4th. A moderate one requiring direct pressure, and strong astringents to check it is commonly met with.

Of the first or fatal class, the writer had not been unfortunate enough to meet with an example. Other surgeons have, however, placed on record a small number of cases fatal from hæmorrhage following the excision of the pharyngeal tonsils, while a much larger number of deaths have been caused by the loss of blood succeeding operative procedures, other than amputations, in the tonsillar region.

Read before the Ontario Medical Association, June 7, 1882.

Coming within the *second* class, two cases have occurred in the practice of Dr. Lefferts from a total of about 500 operations. Both are recorded in his paper. The history of the first I shall read to you since I am able from the standpoint of the patient to add to it somewhat. In the fall of 1874, while at Demilt Dispensary attending the throat-clinic, held on alternate days by Drs. Lefferts and McBurney, I requested the former to remove my tonsils, as they were subject to recurrent attacks of follicular inflammation. I give you in his language what then occurred.

"I amputated both excessively hypertrophied tonsils with the tonsil bistoury. My incisions, I may say here, were made with care, and were such as I had made many times before in other instances. A few moments after the operation, an inspection of the throat having shown no excessive bleeding, I left the dispensary, where the operation had been performed, and my patient, who was using an ice-water gargle. I did not see him again for several hours, and then found him almost exsanguinated and pulseless. Profuse bleeding commenced almost immediately upon my departure, occurring very suddenly. The flow was so rapid that the patient could not clear his mouth of it. Blood passed into the stomach, giving rise to repeated attacks of vomiting, and into the larynx, causing strangulation. As described to me, his condition was for a time a dangerous one. All the resources at hand at the moment that suggested themselves to the doctors present, except pressure, were tried without avail. The hæmorrhage persisted. I was sent for, but not found, and finally my colleague, Dr. McBurney, fortunately reached the case some three hours after the commencement of the bleeding. He at once did what should have been done before, cleared all blood clot out of the pharynx, differentiated the source of the hæmorrhage and applied direct pressure over the spot on the right side from whence it was found to come. In a short time it had ceased. I arrived later, and found my patient stretched upon a bench, as I have said, white, bloodless, and almost pulseless. After an anxious night spent with him where he lay, he was carried in the morning to his home, and slowly convalesced during the following month. There was at no time a recurrence of the bleeding."

In the removal of the right tonsil, the one that gave rise to the trouble afterwards, Dr. Lefferts was