

MEDICAL SCIENCE

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

THE ETIOLOGY AND SURGICAL TREATMENT OF NASAL DISEASE.

BY C. C. RICE, M.D., NEW YORK.

THE successful treatment of nasal disease is, to-day, essentially surgical. The question, "Can catarrh be cured?" which has so frequently been asked by doubting physicians and anxious patients, has only been answered affirmatively since a more correct recognition of the etiology of catarrhal inflammation of the nasal mucous membrane, has devised proper surgical measures to correct these pathological conditions. Medical men laboring in this particular line of practice have just cause for congratulation in the rapid progress which has been made in the successful treatment of diseases of the upper air passages. I shall never forget the discouragements which were daily encountered in the treatment of nasal diseases no longer than eight years ago, and I have no hesitation in saying that if laryngologists or rhinologists were to-day dependent upon the same therapeutical means which they possessed in 1880, I should immediately direct my attention to some other line of medical study. It is not within the limits of this fragmentary paper to enter into a detailed consideration of the minute pathology of nasal catarrh, nor to review the history of the old methods by which practitioners have endeavoured to control the very common and annoying symptoms which are incident to nasal inflammation. The many progressive steps in the treatment of disturbances of the upper air passages which have finally led to the present surgical methods are well known to the gentlemen present. I would like, however, to be able to state so much of the etiology and consequent pathology of nasal irritations and congestions

as will give to us precise clinical indications for treatment, and then at the risk of showing you apparatus which you may be already familiar with, I should like to present to this Society a few of the latest instruments which are employed in the treatment of nasal diseases.

What changes have taken place in the views held as to the pathology of catarrhal inflammation of the nasal passages? The olden methods of treating nasal catarrh were based upon the belief that this disorder differed not at all in its causation from the catarrhal inflammation of any or of all the other mucous membranes of the body. No allowances were made for the exposed position of the nasal mucous membrane, as compared with other mucous membranes, and no thought was given to the peculiar anatomical structure of the nasal tissue structure, as will be seen, which is peculiar to itself and rendered necessary in order to perform its remarkable physiological function. The methods of treatment that have been employed until within the past few years to check catarrhal inflammation of the nasal mucous membrane have been unsuccessful and have deservedly fallen into bad repute, simply because the nasal mucous membrane has been regarded and treated like other mucous membranes of the body. This error came about naturally because the ordinary phenomena of inflammation of mucous membranes—redness, swelling, and hypersecretion—were always exhibited in the nasal cavities in this most common disease, chronic hypertrophic catarrh; and the vegetable and mineral astringents were relied upon, not only to reduce the congestion and the swelling, but to check the hypersecretion also. The patient called upon his physician day after day for weeks and