

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

MENTION SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH COUNTER-IRRITATION MAY BE APPLIED, AND THE METHODS OF APPLICATION.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss F. Sheppard, Dudley Road, Tunbridge Wells.

PRIZE PAPER.

Counter-irritants are employed to produce counter-irritation artificially in some part of the body, with the view of diminishing, counter-acting, or removing irritation or inflammation in some neighbouring part.

Class I.—The slightest, called *Rubefaciens*, are those that merely redden the skin. *Vesicants*, or such as to produce vesicles or blisters, are a more powerful class, and not only cause counter-irritation, but prove evacuant. *Setons* and the actual cautery belong to this class of counter-irritants. *Rubefaciens* are chiefly employed in irritation of the mucous membrane; *vesicants*, in inflammation of serous membrane; *setons*, when the disease is of a suppurative character.

The application of counter-irritation must be rightly timed and placed: not too soon, nor yet too near the seat of the disease. All acute symptoms should have subsided; otherwise, instead of affording relief, it may aggravate the local and general disease.

Liniments are used for counter-irritation. The stronger ones, such as croton oil, belladonna, iodine, &c., should be painted on with a brush, and not rubbed in, and the fluid used sparingly at first over a small surface, to test its effect.

Blisters are a powerful form of counter-irritation; the cuticle or superficial part of the skin becomes raised from the part beneath by an effusion of fluid or serum drawn from the blood by the action of the blistering material. The two methods are: Blistering ointment, which is applied spread on stiff paper or leather to form a plaster cut the required size as ordered, the "emplastrum lyttæ"; and painting the part with blistering fluid. The plaster may be secured by a bandage or handkerchief instead of plaster, which drags when the blister rises. In order to vesicate, the plaster should remain on from eight to ten hours; three or four hours will suffice to produce redness to the skin. When vesication has been produced, the plaster should be gently removed without breaking the blister.

Dressing Blisters.—The vesicle should be opened at the most dependent part by fine-pointed sterilized scissors, and the fluid allowed

to escape into a sterilized test-tube or cotton-wool, and kept for examination, if necessary. The surface must be dressed with a fold of lint covered with an appropriate dressing, and a thin layer of cotton-wool secured over it by a bandage. A warm linseed poultice often relieves after severe vesication; but if desired to keep the blister from healing, savin ointment should be applied on lint instead of a simple dressing.

Leeches are used to remove a small quantity of blood. The skin should be well washed before applying them. To apply the leech it should be held by its larger end in the folds of a cloth, or test-tube, to allow the smaller extremity or head to be directed over the skin in the necessary region. If there is any difficulty, a little milk or sugar and water may be smeared on the skin, when the leech will be sure to bite. The leech-bites should be washed with sterilized water, and absorbent wool be subsequently applied, which will in most cases stop bleeding. A hot fomentation may be applied if it is desired to encourage the bleeding. All leech-bites must be watched, and firm pressure applied if hæmorrhage goes on after removal, and, if necessary, a surgeon sent for, and pressure still applied until his arrival.

Cupping abstracts blood locally (wet and dry cupping), and is usually done by the surgeon. The part to be cupped should be sponged with warm water; the wounds after are covered with a sterile dressing, or allowed to bleed further into a hot fomentation.

Mustard Leaves are dipped into tepid water, and left on long enough to redden the skin, and then a little ointment is spread on lint or linen, and wool and bandage applied.

Mustard Poultices.—To make these take equal parts of linseed meal and mustard; the meal should be mixed with boiling water, and the mustard added while stirring. The mixture should be spread on linen or lint or brown paper, and a layer of muslin over it; it should not be left on too long, especially in the case of old people or children, without ascertaining its effect; a corner should be turned down afterwards in a few minutes, and the skin should be examined to prevent the production of a blister.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss G. C. Cheatley, Miss H. M. Springbeck, Miss M. James, Miss F. Robinson, Miss J. Maclean.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

State how to make, and the uses of, pastes and plasters.

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