

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS OF A SCHOOL NURSE? HOW MAY SHE ASSIST IN RAISING THE STANDARD OF NATIONAL HEALTH?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Catharine Wright, Dryden Road, Bush Hill Park, Enfield.

PRIZE PAPER.

The principal functions of a school nurse cover a wide field of activities, all of which have for their object the raising of a higher standard of health among the school children, and in following up this ideal many other branches in connection with this school work have opened up, so that the school nurse of to-day has the opportunity of using her trained knowledge and experience, proving an invaluable help towards maintaining a national standard of health and fitness amongst the school children, many of whom live under the most adverse conditions of poverty, neglect, and ignorance.

It is in the elementary schools of the London County Council, principally, that her work begins, and usually the routine visit to the school is notified to the heads of the school previously, so that absentees may be present for the nurse's visit. Once in each term every child is examined for cleanliness, the hair and skin are inspected, and all conditions recorded. Verminous children are excluded: visits paid to the home, and the parents instructed as to the best method of cleansing. If this cannot be accomplished, the cleansing process may be compulsory under the Children's Act.

Any infectivity of skin is noticed, and the children referred to the school doctor, who will diagnose, and curative treatment then follows at a clinic or treatment centre.

Any eye disease, likely to be infectious, is also referred to the school doctor, and the same procedure followed, and aural disease is carefully supervised under curative treatment. This entails many visits to the homes of the children, and the school nurse is brought into touch with the family, and is almost invariably taken into confidence, and her sympathy and helpful advice readily accepted.

The medical inspections are of great importance. For these, the selected age-groups of children are prepared by weighing, measuring, and vision testing, an accurate record kept, which later on becomes useful for statistical purposes. The parents are urged to be present, and here again the school nurse is in touch with them, and has often to follow up the cases for curative treatment, getting

vouchers for clinic and centre or hospital treatment, watching over the cases until they return to school.

In various districts, school clinics and treatment centres are in active progress, a very large number of defects being treated with the best result, supervised by the school doctors.

Dental centres are at work, the school nurse taking duty and helping the doctor and dentist in the recovery room. The X-ray department of a treatment centre utilizes the school nurse, she preparing the heads and keeping the children in suitable positions during the X-ray exposure. On certain days there are operations for tonsils and adenoids, the school nurses taking duty as in an ordinary operating theatre.

Mentally and physically defective children have their own school nurses, who well understand the supervision and care these children need.

The teachers of each school realise how beneficial the work of the school nurse has become, and the heads of the school nurses' department, realizing the many problems and difficulties that arise in this kind of work, are ever ready to receive and give suggestions bearing on these difficulties.

The work is intensely interesting, and may be more so, if, under the new Education Act, the services of the school nurses are as appreciated and used to the fullest extent, for the younger children will specially need trained knowledge, and the older children guided and taught a hygienic value of themselves.

With this wider knowledge the standard of national health will be on a good basis, which *must* result in future fitness and capacity for the girls and boys who are to be the parents of the future generation.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss B. Courtenay, Miss M. James, Miss P. Thomson.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What do you know of ex-ophthalmic goitre, its symptoms, and nursing care?

We desire to draw the attention of nurses to the Form of Petition to the Prime Minister which appears inside the front cover. Although the principle of representation of the organized Nurses' Societies has been inserted in the 7th draft of the College of Nursing Bill, "there is many a slip between the cup and the lip," and the more representative the Petition the more influence it will have when our Bill is before Parliament.

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