

Our Prize Competition.

We have pleasure in awarding the 5s. prize this week to Miss Sylvia Parker, the General Hospital, Nottingham, for her article printed below on the subject—

WHAT IS DUST? HOW SHOULD IT BE REMOVED.

I.

“For dust thou art, unto dust shalt thou return.”

These words are familiar to us all. Let us see from a physiological point of view what is meant by the “dust” of the human body.

All organic substances are prone to decay. The human body is an organic structure. Daily and hourly the oxygen of the air enters into our bodies, burning up the various tissues.

And what is produced by this burning? A few gases and a little dust.

The time comes when the body is no longer able to repair its used up tissues. Death ensues. A few months later and what is left? A few bones and a little dust.

As with the human body, so with all organic substances. Wherever there is movement, dust is produced.

Wherever heat is generated, dust results. The oxygen of the air burning up the carbon in our fireplaces, produces dust. Dust is, therefore, a waste substance, a product of chemical action.

Combined with the dust that we see lying in our houses and on our furniture is a certain amount of “fluff,” produced by the wear and tear of these same organic substances, but incomplete in its condition of decay.

Dust acts as a harbinger for innumerable germs. Therefore, from a hygienic point of view, it is desirable to remove it as effectually as possible.

There are certain forms of employment which are spoken of as “dusty occupations.”

Amongst these may be mentioned coal mining, road mending, the making of pottery. The air in these mines and factories becomes impregnated with minute particles, which cause a special kind of dust produced from the pulverisation of substances contained in these mines, or used for manufacturing purposes. This dust may be either organic or inorganic.

II.

Our chief object in removing dust is to prevent its dispersion.

Where floors and corridors are tessellated or made of some washable substance, it is a good plan to dispense with the ordinary sweeping (by which a large amount of dust is merely transferred from one place to another), and wash them over with a damp cloth. Should

this be impracticable the floor may be sprinkled with sawdust, which has been moistened by some antiseptic. This will prevent the dust from rising. The same plan may be adopted for a polished or carpeted floor, and tea leaves may be adopted as an alternative.

In these days of many inventions, various appliances have been produced to minimise dust. Amongst these, at the institution in which I am working, a sweeping brush has been used, with very good results, containing a little reservoir of kerosene oil, which lubricates the bristles, and not only moistens the dust, but binds it together, leaving behind a very clean surface. Walls of a washable texture should be washed over with a damp cloth. All articles of furniture and ledges of a non-washable character should be dusted first with a damp duster, then well rubbed with a dry duster.

The papers sent by Miss A. M. Welchman, Miss L. Aronovich, Miss E. Marshall, Miss M. Bielby, Miss C. Rands, and Miss E. H. Gibert, are also highly commended.

Miss M. Atkinson observes:—

The air is always more or less loaded with comparatively harmless germs, which cause the putrefaction of dead matter, and which, if allowed to fall upon a wound, may manufacture in the secretions a poison which may be taken into the blood, and cause septicæmia.

Unless their production in the wound be arrested enough may be formed to kill the patient, or they may irritate the wound and prevent it healing, and cause it to pour out pus.

In relation to the removal of dust, Miss Atkinson writes:—All dust, in whatever way it is collected, should be burnt to make sure of all microbes being destroyed.

Miss C. Rands defines dust as “a fine dry particle of earth or other matter that may be easily raised and wafted by the wind.” In regard to the removal of ordinary household dust, she says:—Some people use a slightly damp cloth to dust with, but it spoils the brightness of most articles. I prefer a soft cloth slightly damp with methylated spirit, with a soft cloth to polish after. It not only kills the microbes and removes the dust, but makes the articles look like new.

QUESTION FOR THIS WEEK.

What is the function of the placenta?

Rules for competing for this Competition will be found on page xii.

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