

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT SYMPTOMS WOULD LEAD YOU TO SUSPECT PUERPERAL THROMBOSIS OF THE LOWER EXTREMITIES?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss M. Dods, 123, New Bond Street, London, W., for her paper on the above subject.

PRIZE PAPER.

The first symptoms leading me to suspect thrombosis of the lower extremities in a puerperal patient may be very slight—perhaps sleeplessness and some rise in temperature. The patient may complain of headache, or just a heaviness. She will probably say that she feels as though she has rheumatism in one or both legs and that they feel a little stiff, numb, or hot. The pulse quickens, and there is constipation. More severe symptoms will ensue, or they may be severe from the beginning.

The fever, which may be from 101 degrees to 105 degrees, may be ushered in with one or more rigors. The patient complains of pain in the groin, or deep in the abdomen low down, gradually increasing till it reaches the calves, or she may have a sudden sharp pain in the calf which spreads up towards the groin; she will be thirsty, with coated tongue, and will probably vomit. Within a few hours the symptoms increase in severity, and swelling begins, generally where the pain was first felt. The buttocks and vulva may be swollen and painful.

One or both legs from groins to toes will be intensely swollen, and may even become double their usual size. The skin feels hot, is white and shiny, looking as though it would burst; but it does not pit on pressure, as in dropsy.

If the patient is a multipara, the nurse will have ascertained beforehand the history of past labours. If the present labour has been very tedious—a forceps case, or one of adherent placenta or severe post-partum hæmorrhage—she will be on the look-out, and suspect at once the slightest complaint of stiffness, numbness, or aching from groin to calf.

Puerperal thrombosis is popularly known as "white leg," an alternative scientific term being "Phlegmasia Alba Dolens" (*Phlegmasia*—inflammation, *alba*—white, *dolens*—painful).

HONOURABLE MENTION.

Honourable mention is accorded to Miss E. Atkinson, Miss M. Punchard, Miss A. Alsop, Miss J. Dalton, Miss E. Macintosh, and Miss P. O'Brien.

Miss O'Brien draws attention to the well-known fact that the left leg is usually attacked. A theory as to the cause of the disease is that it is of septic origin. The danger of the dislodgment of a thrombus must always be present to the mind of the nurse, and the limb be kept at rest, or embolism may prove fatal.

Miss Punchard writes:—"The vein can be felt under the skin like a cord and can be easily traced. The leg continues to swell, until the skin is tightly stretched, becoming white in colour and shining like marble.

"The temperature still keeps up, being higher in the evening, the patient still complaining of headache, pain increasing in leg, restlessness, and inability to sleep.

"This is most common in the second week after childbirth; it lasts from three to six weeks, the symptoms gradually subsiding under treatment."

Miss J. Dalton points out that puerperal thrombosis is usually of septic origin, although in some cases no sepsis is present, and that it is due to blocking of the veins and lymphatics.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Describe the methods of applying (a) dry cupping, (b) wet cupping.

COLOGNE.

The Incorporated Midwives' Institute has accepted the invitation of the National Council of Nurses to nominate a representative to attend the Cologne Congress. The Scottish Society of Trained Nurses will also be represented. Fraulein Karll writes that she will be delighted to welcome the nominated representatives—as no one can attend the International Council meetings without gathering wonderful inspiration from them, and thus ultimately cementing national nursing organization.

Transport has become so easy that every year more and more foreign nurses visit our country to enquire into nursing matters and see our beautiful hospitals and nursing schools. Just now Miss Maiken Lütken and Miss Anna Hansen, from Copenhagen, are spending a month in London "doing" our hospitals, and learning all they can of our nursing organization, going on later to Cologne.

Sister Lindhagen, of Stockholm, has been appointed on to a committee of research into nursing conditions in Sweden, and will be sent abroad to study foreign conditions. She will be in Berlin at the end of June, and also attends the Congress at Cologne.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)