

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

GIVE A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE FOLLOWING DISEASES, WITH DETAILS OF THEIR GENERAL NURSING AND MANAGEMENT (a) CHOREA, (b) ACUTE MENINGITIS.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Maude Cullen, Prospero Road, Highgate, N.

PRIZE PAPER.

CHOREA.

"Chorea" or "St. Vitus's Dance" is a disease of the nervous system. It is characterised by irregular movements affecting different parts of the body, more especially the face and limbs.

Causes.—The disease is usually brought about by fright or mental shock. More common in children, and oftener found in girls than boys. It may last an indefinite time, varying from a few weeks to months.

Symptoms usually begin with the child being irritable, she is unable to keep still, is very fidgety, and, movements increasing, she gets very jerky in limbs, and in time is not able to feed herself: the movements may continue while child is asleep.

Treatment consists in keeping the child quiet, in bed, taking care to have the bed away from the light, as a strong light tends to increase the movements. Fresh air, and good nourishing food are most essential. Great care must be taken not to startle the child by noisily shutting the door. If she is in a cot, I should pad the sides all round to prevent her hurting herself, if the movements are very marked.

The bowels must be kept open regularly by aperients, calomel 1 gr. or 2 gr. being very good, given once a day (dose varying with the age of the child).

Feeding may be rather a difficulty if the movements are very marked, the patient should never drink out of a thin glass, as she may bite a piece out, and swallow it. Solid food should be given with a spoon, and not a fork.

The drug most commonly prescribed is arsenic, and while the child is taking it, the nurse must carefully watch for any symptoms of poisoning. The majority of cases recover from this disease, but some may die of exhaustion or inflammation of the heart.

ACUTE MENINGITIS.

Meningitis is due to inflammation of the membranes covering the brain.

There are two forms:—(1) Simple; (2) Tubercular.

The latter is the most common, being the acute form.

Symptoms consist of loss of appetite, peevishness, constipation, the child may lose flesh; and the nights may be disturbed, the child continually crying out in sleep, and at times he may grind his teeth. There may be headache, vomiting, delirium, and convulsions, with fever and high temperature.

The patient may continue to have these symptoms for weeks or even months, or, on the other hand, improvement may take place; if not, then there will be a feeble pulse, with increasing loss of consciousness, the patient becoming comatose, with Cheyne-Stokes breathing, ending in death. There is usually a good deal of head retraction when the head is bent backwards upon the neck. The child will have severe pain in the head, causing it to scream out continually. A great objection to light and noise is noticeable in most cases, so the surroundings should be kept as quiet as possible.

Treatment is very unsatisfactory in most cases. An ice bag may be applied to the head, and the room kept dark and quiet. The bowels should be very freely opened.

Counter irritation may be applied to the back of the neck or scalp (after shaving) in the form of blisters or stimulating liniments. The diet must consist chiefly of milk. In the later stages of the disease, if vomiting persists, food may have to be administered through the nasal tube or by nutrient enemata.

Some cases are cured when the skull is opened by trephining, and the pressure on the brain relieved.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention, Miss Amy Phipps, Miss E. M. Pickard, Miss F. Sheppard, Miss E. Maclean, Miss P. Jones, Miss J. Robinson.

Miss Ella Maclean gives rheumatism as one of the chief causes of chorea, and says that some authorities regard it as rheumatism of the brain.

She also writes, "Never allow a patient to use a knife or fork, but prepare food before going to the bedside, and use a spoon. Give a little water after food to prevent small pieces of food remaining in the mouth. The nurse must gain the affection of her patient, who must on no account be exposed to ridicule."

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What is a hydatid cyst? Mention the commonest situations in which they are found, also the surgical emergencies which are likely to occur in connection with them.

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