

monia and empyema not infrequently occur in convalescence.

In the acute stage certain eruptions may be present, of which the most common is a crop of purple spots which do not fade on pressure. The distribution of these is not definite, and, in fact, they are commonly found in septicæmia from any cause. One sees them often, for instance, in malignant endocarditis, and in septicæmia from middle ear disease. They do not resemble the eruption of typhus or enteric fevers. Generally they come out within a few hours of the onset of the disease. Unfortunately, they have given a name "Spotted Fever" to the disease, which is singularly unfortunate, as it leads those who have never seen a case of cerebro-spinal meningitis to look to the eruption for assistance in the diagnosis.

The diagnosis is difficult, in fact often almost impossible, by clinical reasoning alone. The only certain method is to withdraw some cerebro-spinal fluid by lumbar puncture, and examine it for the presence of the meningococcus, and the increase in the number of leucocytes. Cultures from the naso-pharynx are in practice quite useless, as the search for them is frequently unsuccessful even when they are really present in that situation, and they may be found in persons who are not suffering from the disease itself.

Clinically the disease is very liable to be confused with influenza, and with other forms of meningitis, also with septicæmia due to suppuration in other regions of the body; but as the diagnosis does not have to be made by the nurse I will not dwell on this point, except to point out that it is usually undiagnosed cases that are responsible for the spread of the disease.

Treatment is singularly ineffective in the majority of the cases. Sometimes a serum prepared from the specific organism does some good when injected into the spinal canal, but it also frequently fails. Sedatives are required for the pain, and tepid sponging is useful in controlling the pyrexia.

In the cases that are not fatal, skilful nursing is of the utmost importance; the main point is to get in as much food as the patient will stand, in order to strengthen the leucocytes of the host in their fight against the invading microbes.

A word of caution must come here. The disease is very infectious, and nurses are apt to contract the organism from their patient. Unfortunately, a staff nurse has already died of the disease at Boulogne. It is therefore essential that anyone coming in contact with the infection should take all reasonable precau-

tions, of which the most important is irrigation of the naso-pharynx (not merely the nose and mouth) with normal salt solution, by means of a nasal douche, taking care that the solution not only enters into one nostril, but flows out of the other, the mouth being open at the time. It is best not to use any antiseptic solution for this purpose, as it is not possible to kill the germs by any chemical solution that could be tolerated in the nose, and all such germicides are apt to injure the delicate lining of the nostril, and thus make a breach through which the germs can enter. We endeavour to wash them away, not to kill them.

From this brief description of the malady it will be seen that epidemic meningitis is a very terrible disease, and that its incidence at the present time points to the great danger of overcrowding troops or civilians inside buildings. Fresh air is the great preventive, and in hospitals it is essential, if we are to avoid the loss or permanent disablement of brave men and women whose lives and services can ill be spared.

A DEEP BLACK BORDER.

We print in another column a little letter from Signora Garibaldi from Rome; it came to us in card form, with a deep black border. When war broke out, this lady was the mother of six gallant sons. Alas! two of these splendid young men have already fallen in France fighting our battle. We are indeed flattered that their brave mother should read our JOURNAL, and beg her to realise the deep sympathy British nurses feel for her in this sad hour of loss; and yet pride must gild the sorrow of the mother of brave men who have fought and died for liberty.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

In February, while the dawn was grey,
In that famed Place named after Waterloo,
A workman from a new-carved statue drew
The canvas, and revealed thee to the day.
The day? . . . the grey Crimean monument,
The chill bronze soldiers round about the
Place,
This was the crowd that met to do thee grace,
And the chance stragglers that back and forward
went!

Where was the orator to praise thy name?
The rank on rank of soldiers thou didst bless?
The nurses whom thou taughtst thy skilful-
ness?
Yet what could crowds avail to raise thy fame?
Still with thy lamp thou walks't the hospital,
Still soldiers kiss thy shadow on the wall.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)