

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

### WHAT DEVICES CAN A NURSE EMPLOY IN CARING FOR A PATIENT SUFFERING FROM SLEEPLESSNESS?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Ména M. G. Bielby, Cranford, Middlesex.

#### PRIZE PAPER.

In combating sleeplessness in a patient the body, soul, and mind must be equally considered. The first essentials are a sense of supreme comfort, pure air, a temperature of about 55° Fahrenheit, and perfect quiet.

During the later hours of the day avoid every subject that might prove mentally stimulating.

When it is not possible to arrange a change of beds at night, the pillow cases, upper sheet, and night attire should be changed. The bed should be warmed, using two hot-water bottles; one may be applied to the abdomen. The patient needs to be more warmly clad for sleep than in the day time. A warm bath, with or without mustard, or a hot footbath to which a tablespoonful of mustard has been added, will induce sleep. This should be given in a warm room, preferably before a fire, and towels and night wear should all be warmed.

Useful expedients are rubbing the arms lightly with eau de Cologne, massaging the spine downwards, or gently combing the hair for ten minutes, if not objected to.

The perfume of fresh violets promotes sleep. Some patients like a hop pillow, or a pillow filled with down, lavender, lemon verbena, and other scented herbs. A useful and harmless remedy may be found in camphor, either by holding a piece in the hand, or by sprinkling a handkerchief with spirits of camphor and holding it near the nose. Where indigestion causes sleeplessness three or four drops of essence of peppermint in hot water often gives relief.

In the matter of diet at night idiosyncrasy must be studied. Some cannot sleep after food; others require a light meal just before settling to sleep. A cupful of hot milk, sipped slowly, is helpful. Efficient homely remedies are a stewed onion, onion broth, the heart of a lettuce, or a roast apple. An excellent remedy, much used abroad, is from a teaspoonful to a teaspoonful and a half of orange-flower water in a wineglass of hot water, with or without sugar, the last thing at night. Or orange-bud tea may be given, made by a teaspoonful of crushed buds infused for ten minutes in a breakfastcupful of boiling water. Honey tea suits some patients.

In cases where the patient becomes wakeful after sleeping three or four hours, a little

nourishment will often recapture sleep. For this purpose a cup of Allenburys' Diet, with an Allenburys' rusk, is excellent.

When the head is hot it is a good plan to apply evaporating cold cloths.

The bed must be perfectly comfortable, so as to allow the relaxation of every muscle. A number of little pillows, which may be filled with vegetable down, will often transform an ordinary bed into a luxurious nest by arranging them according to the patient's requirements.

When it is difficult to secure a sufficiently subdued light without excluding air this may be achieved by running a length of blind cord across the room from one upper corner of the window at an angle of 45 degrees to it, and over this hanging a dark rug or shawl.

Musical patients sometimes find a helpful lullaby in the Japanese glass wind-bells, preferably hung in an adjoining room and played on by a slight current of air.

For those patients able and willing to employ it the following device often proves successful when all others fail: Fix the mind on the breathing, keeping the eyes in imagination directed down the two sides of the nose, watching the breath proceeding from the mouth. By filling the mind with this single successional subject other thoughts are prevented from entering it, and sleep ensues naturally and easily.

Auto-suggestion is a valuable means, especially in nervous cases. This is best practised in the morning, and for a few minutes at stated times during the day. The principle is that of giving commands to the sub-conscious mind. The patient should repeat six or eight times, thinking, feeling, and meaning what is said: "I sleep soundly all night." This process banishes the negative feelings of fear, and replaces them with the positive feelings of power to succeed.

Many patients find the pathway to sleep while being read to. The reader's voice should be pitched rather low, and a somewhat monotonous inflection be employed. The matter read should be soothing, not stimulating. The sweetest of singers' invocation is a good example:—

"Spirit of dreams and silvern memories, delicate Sleep! . . .

I, in chilling twilight stand and wait

At the portcullis, at thy castle gate,

Yearning to see the magic door of dreams

Turn on its noiseless hinges, delicate Sleep!"

#### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss J. G. Gilchrist, Miss A. Rachel

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