

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT IS INTESTINAL COLIC? WHAT ARE THE COMMON CAUSES? WHAT IS THE USUAL TREATMENT?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss A. McClure, Nurses' Home, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C.

PRIZE PAPER.

Intestinal colic is a griping, spasmodic pain in the umbilical and hypogastric regions. There is generally tenderness, but no rise in temperature. In infants a drawing up of the upper lip, a loud spasmodic cry, and drawing up of the lower limbs indicate colic.

Cause.—Colic may be caused by undigested food in the intestine (often the cause of infants' suffering) or constipation, both causing increased muscular contractions of the intestines of a spasmodic nature, and also generating gases from the decaying matter which distend the intestine and increase the pain. The spasmodic contractions may be so severe in infants as to cause intussusception and necessitate operation. Chills, especially exposure to wet weather and standing about with wet feet, may also be a cause. In lead-poisoning, very severe colic lasting for days is always one of the symptoms.

Treatment.—Relief may be given by hot stupes, applying hot-water bottles (well protected) to the part, these by their weight giving a little pressure, which also helps to lessen the pain, or the patient may lie face downwards, pressing the abdomen on a pillow. In the case of infants, resting face downwards on the nurse's knee, or with her hand pressed on the part, will give relief, or a little gentle massage. Change of diet may be necessary for infants, to remove the cause (indigestion), and in adults, if constipation is the cause, an aperient should, under medical advice, be given. Carminatives, such as peppermint, oil of cloves, or a few drops of camphor, often give relief by diminishing the sensitiveness of the nerve endings. Care should be taken to avoid whatever has caused the attack, whether cold, or wrong diet occasioning indigestion.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention :—Miss J. G. Gilchrist, Miss A. M. Jones, Miss B. Macintyre, Miss J. Mayne, Miss M. Burton.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Why has the cocaine habit such ruinous results to health?

AN INGENIOUS INSTRUMENT.

A new instrument, which is still on its trial, is an ingenious bullet extractor, the use of which is made possible by X-rays. It seems almost incredible that so delicate an operation as the extraction of a bullet should be performed in the dark, but that is what actually happens.

When the room is darkened and the fluorescent screen placed in proper position, the shadow of the bullet and the points of the forceps appear when an X-ray tube is placed under the table. Of course, it is impossible for the surgeon under these conditions to use a scalpel, or any sharp instrument, and the bullet extractor is made with a blunt end, which gently works its way down by displacing the structures, rather than forcing its way through them. It is necessary that a skilled surgeon should perform the operation, for the results would be disastrous were an artery or nerve injured. To avoid any danger in this direction the blades of the forceps are connected with an electric bell, which only rings when both blades are touching the bullet, when they are open to grasp it, and when it is actually seized. The surgeon can therefore work with confidence, and with the assurance that he is not crushing any important blood vessel or other structure while he is extracting the foreign body.

The instrument (says the *Times*, which gives a full description of this interesting appliance) has been used with success in a number of cases, but it is still upon its trial; later on it will no doubt be possible to state whether or not this beautiful theory will stand the test of actual service conditions. It appears to have given good results in experimental work, but the real test will be when the instrument comes to be used by others than those who have carried out the investigations.

A SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEF.

At a meeting of the Devon Nursing Association, Sir Thomas Acland, Bart., referred to a superstitious belief prevalent in some of the rural districts that it was unlucky to cut a baby's nails. In the case in question a mother declined to cut her baby's nails until it was twelve months old. As the only person brave enough to bite them off—the father—was away at the Front, the result was that the little one's face was terribly scratched.

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