

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHY HAS THE COCAINE HABIT SUCH RUINOUS RESULTS TO HEALTH?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Dora Vine, Eversley, Exmouth.

PRIZE PAPER.

"I am so fast in prison that I cannot get forth" might have been ejaculated by a victim of the cocaine habit, for if alcohol and morphia bind their victims with iron chains, cocaine uses the strongest steel links for its votaries. Alcohol and morphia may be taken in moderation for years without causing any degeneration to be remarked by the patient's friends, but however sly and cunning the cocaine taker may be, the hallmark of the drug only too soon appears, and proclaims to all and sundry that the patient has sold his birthright for a terribly fascinating drug, perhaps the most dangerous drug we possess. The danger lies in the fact that cocaine absolutely rules its victims, and constantly demands fresh sacrifice. Honour, truth, cleanliness, and self-control, all these go, and go quickly, and the victim, who but recently was respected and honourable, is now debased in every way. The euphoria caused by cocaine is so ephemeral, then more must be taken, and then more, until the whole system is clogged with it, and the patient becomes so obviously abnormal that his friends are obliged to look into his state of health. The whole physical, mental, and spiritual ego seems changed—"possessed," one may truly say—and even the patient normally honourable and accustomed to a high moral standard, cannot get out of prison, although he may make pitiful and constant efforts. As soon as the supply of the drug becomes low, or it is cut off, torment begins, and any plan, however foolhardy and hare-brained, will be thought and carried out; in fact, the ingenuity with which these patients will obtain their "dearest enemy" often makes superficial observers think they could easily give it up if they wanted to. This is not so. Of course, one does hear and I know personally of what one may call revelations of God's power or miracles nowadays, as when, for instance, a patient taken ill suddenly with nephritis managed to cure herself in a nursing home by prayer and faith. Neither doctors nor nurses had any knowledge of her cocaine addiction until she herself told them after her convalescence. This may seem far-fetched, but it is absolute fact. Those in charge of the case were not thinking of such a possibility, and the patient, a nurse who had been advised to use cocaine to wean herself from the morphia habit,

realised that she now had a chance, and during her enforced abstinence she returned to the faith she had deserted, and found rest and peace. In the ordinary case, however, we must understand that two distinct facts hold good in every case of inebriety, viz., (1) it is *always* caused by the refusal of suffering; (2) no case must be regarded as hopeless.

With regard to the first point, one should try and win the patient's confidence, and re-educate him with regard to pain, not necessarily removing the suffering, but making it a blessing. A sensitive boy with a clubfoot was once asked by his headmaster: "Are you not too sensitive about your foot? Has it ever occurred to you to thank God for it? He has given you this as a mark of His favour, knowing that your shoulders are strong enough to bear this cross for His sake." To drug takers, especially nurses, who may be tempted and may ask: "Why am I given this load? Others have suffering to bear, but not a trouble like mine—something that makes one despise oneself, and from which one cannot altogether escape, because the temptation will recur as long as there is a chance of the evil one getting my soul." The answer is again: "This heavy weight is given just to make a stepping stone to higher things, and one can imagine how precious such a soul must be when the powers of evil relax no effort to take it by storm." Secondly, such cases must be nursed in suitable homes by nurses trained for the work. They *must* be imbued with a true love of their fellow-men, they must love their special work, and they must make their patients help themselves, and their wrecked souls and bodies will find peace.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss J. G. Gilchrist, Miss K. Kohler, Miss Macpherson, Miss B. Robinson, Miss M. Goldsmith.

Miss Gilchrist says that the three classes of persons who succumb to the cocaine habit are: (1) Those who neglect their health and have an inherited tendency to drug taking; (2) the neurotic, highly strung, unstable type who suffer from nerve exhaustion, and (3) the brain worker, working at high pressure.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What care should refrigerators receive? How would you preserve ice?

We have received, a week too late, a paper from Miss Dorothy A. Woodward on "Intestinal Colic," which we specially regret, as it is evident much pains had been taken in writing it.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)