

a most vital matter for education and rational treatment.

#### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss A. M. Johnson, Miss Dora Vine, Miss Catherine Wright, Miss Jane Armstrong, Miss P. E. Robinson.

#### QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Give a short description of the following diseases, and give details of general nursing and management:—(a) chorea; (b) delirium tremens.

### PRACTICAL POINTS.

#### WARM BEDS IN OPEN AIR.

"One of the chief difficulties in the application of open-air treatment in winter has," says the *British Medical Journal*, "been in connection with the maintenance of uniform warmth in the bed. The hot-water bottle has hitherto been the only means available, and although its use is almost universal, no system has yet been devised to minimise its obvious shortcomings where a steady and uniform degree of warmth is desired. In a report recently issued by the managers of the Lord Mayor Treloar's Hospital for Crippled Children at Alton the medical superintendent, Dr. H. J. Gauvain, gives an account of a new method of heating which would seem to deserve the attention of all hospital managers. Details, either of construction or of cost, are not included in the report, but the plan consists in the application of electricity as a means of uniform warmth to the mattress upon which the patient lies. It has already been tried and proved efficient, and a complete ward is to be furnished with such electrically heated mattresses. The system is stated to be "simple, safe, economical and efficient," and the degree of heat can be regulated so as to maintain an even temperature under all conditions. It is claimed that the problem of keeping patients warm in open-air institutions has now been solved, and if it can indeed be shown to be economical, as that term is usually understood, then its introduction should be welcomed wherever electric facilities can be combined with open-air beds. But it would appear from the published balance sheet that expense has not to be quite so rigidly regarded at Alton as at most institutions dependent upon public charity. It may be noted that no less than £4,000 have been expended on fuel, lighting, water, and sewerage. No mention is made as to cost of electric current, which would probably be included under the heading of lighting. Further particulars as to construction, cost of installation and maintenance of the new mattresses would be welcomed by all hospital authorities."

Dr. Gauvain, in a letter in a later issue of our contemporary, writes that a detailed report

on the method adopted at Alton is in course of preparation for the Local Government Board. In the meantime he gives the following preliminary particulars:—

"The system may be adapted to existing mattresses. These simply require the insertion of the heating elements. The mattresses are differentially heated to ensure that the greatest amount of heat is generated at the foot-end of the patient, a certain amount about the body, and none at all at the head. By the method of wiring adopted the mattress may be turned from side to side or foot to head, but the heating in relation to the patient nevertheless remains distributed as before described.

"A mattress being usually stuffed with non-conducting materials when thus electrically equipped becomes a potential heat reservoir, the heat being only gradually disseminated. This is much to be preferred to local application of heat as obtained by hot-water bottles, electric heaters, and the like, and avoids their dangers and discomforts.

"The heat developed in the bed may be controlled at the bedside by either patient or attendant, throughout all the beds in the ward by the Sister in charge, or throughout all the beds in the hospital by some person in authority. This flexibility of heat application is of value and is secured with exactitude and without labour. Its advantages are especially apparent when a sudden fall of temperature creates a demand for more heat, as heat is rapidly available to the extent required at negligible cost. With the rise of the thermometer the current generating the heat may be at once reduced or cut off altogether. Indeed, it would be possible to cause the heat generated to be automatically regulated by thermometer for the institution as a whole, while still being available to a greater or lesser degree for individual patients.

"The saving of bedding and labour is obvious, and it becomes practicable for the medical attendant to prescribe the exact amount of heat he desires to supply to any patient with the same exactness as he would order a diet or drug.

"There is nothing to get out of order. I have used such a mattress myself for the purpose of thorough testing for the past two winters. My mattress is simply connected up with an ordinary wall plug used for supplying the current for a bedside lamp. I switch the current off before retiring and the bed remains comfortably warm through the night if the current had been turned on some two hours previously. The bed is always well aired and the heat generated is applied scientifically where required."

Dr. Willoughby, Medical Officer of Health for the Port of London, records the occurrence of six cases of enteric fever at Northfleet, which were traced to the eating of periwinkles. Inquiry is being made with the view of closing the source of supply of the periwinkles supposed to be contaminated.

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