

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

GIVE A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE FOLLOWING DISEASES, AND GIVE DETAILS OF GENERAL NURSING AND MANAGEMENT: (a) CHOREA, (b) DELIRIUM TREMENS.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss B. Grey Johnson, Bexley, Kent.

PRIZE PAPER.

CHOREA.

Chorea may develop at any time of life, but it chiefly occurs during childhood and adolescence, and I think perhaps most of us associate the word "chorea" with children. The disease, unfortunately, is a common one, and is believed to be due to the effect of an infectious agent, or its toxin, on the central nervous system, characterized by irregular, involuntary muscular contractions, resulting in movements of a purposeless nature.

Sometimes the symptoms are very slight and remain so for some time; the fingers are only twitched a little, and irregular movements are scarcely noticed, but the child often drops things that she attempts to carry.

In some cases there is decided paralysis, with only slight choreic movements.

Movements of a very violent nature are exceptional, but occasionally they do occur, and mostly in young pregnant women; in these cases standing or sitting becomes impossible, and the patient is confined to bed, where she throws herself about in the wildest contortions.

Many choreics have had rheumatic fever or have cardiac disease, but there is a form of chorea which appears late in life, and is not associated with either of these, but with definite insanity, and it may in this form recur in several members of the same family. The prognosis in children is very favourable, but in young adults it is more uncertain.

The essential treatment is rest in bed, quietness, plenty of plain, nourishing food, and fresh air.

Children suffering from this disease should not be subject to the ridicule of companions nor to much study of lessons; in short, everything tending to worry and annoy should be kept from them until they have completely recovered.

In very severe cases the patient must be protected from injury, otherwise severe bruising or worse may take place, even though she be in bed.

Massage is of great benefit in reducing the disease to more moderate limits, to be followed afterwards by out-of-door gymnastic exercises.

DELIRIUM TREMENS.

Delirium tremens occurs in those who habitually drink freely, and who have recently been taking large quantities continuously for some days.

As a distaste for drink is often one of the first manifestations of the disease we are not surprised to hear sometimes that the patient had left off drinking for two or three days before the symptoms came on.

Mental shock, the onset of an acute disease, or an injury will cause delirium tremens without any evidence of any amount of drinking beyond the daily average. The first symptoms are loss of appetite, sleeplessness, restlessness, and great irritability; later on the patient constantly talks and addresses those about him, or imaginary persons, quickly changing from one subject to another. As the condition gets worse he has definite hallucinations and illusions, and may, under some false impression, strike those who are looking after him or do himself some injury.

The temperature rises quickly, the pulse is quick and full, and the hands shake, and the lips and tongue tremble.

In favourable cases an improvement begins to take place on the third day, the patient falling into a natural sleep lasting for some hours, from which he awakes much refreshed, and gradually an improvement takes place in all respects.

In more serious cases death may result from exhaustion, cardiac failure, or pneumonia.

The chief points in the nursing are absolute quietness and a darkened room, firmness, tact, and constant observation, as one must always bear in mind the likelihood of the patient doing himself or others an injury.

Liquid food in small quantities should be given every two or three hours.

Narcotics do good in some cases, but are to be given with caution, as there is in cases of delirium tremens great resistance to the action of drugs. One would think that a patient once having had what is commonly spoken of as D.T.'s would give up the drinking of alcohol, but unfortunately this is not so.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Ethel E. Hall, Miss A. M. Johnson, Miss B. Carter, Miss M. Robinson, Miss J. Baldwin, Miss Dora Vine.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Describe the abdominal complications of enteric fever, and give an account of the methods of nursing employed in these.

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