

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

HOW WOULD YOU RECOGNIZE PERFORATION IN A CASE OF ENTERIC FEVER? WHAT IMMEDIATE ACTION WOULD YOU TAKE, AND HOW COULD YOU TEMPORARILY RELIEVE THE PATIENT?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss M. D. Hunter, Section Hospital, Kineton, near Warwick.

PRIZE PAPER.

Perforation, one of the most dreaded complications of enteric fever, occurs generally during the second, third, or even fourth week. It may easily be the result of careless nursing, as it can be caused by various abdominal disturbances, such as vomiting or indigestion (from injudicious food), defæcation, the administration of an aperient, or the exertion of moving or trying to sit up. If perforation occurs independently of any of these causes it is owing to the floor of one of the ulcerated Peyer's patches giving way, and allowing the contents of the bowel to be extravasated into the peritonéal cavity, with the resulting peritonitis. Occasionally peritonitis occurs though no perforation is subsequently discovered, this being due to extension of inflammation through the peritoneal coat.

Perforation is recognised by a combination of the following signs:—

1. Sudden acute abdominal pain. Frequently there is a rigor with the pain or soon after.
2. There will be some change in the appearance of the abdomen (either distension or retraction), also rigidity of the abdominal muscles, and the abdomen will be seen not to move on respiration, or scarcely at all. Nearly always there is tenderness, and there may be pain on palpation.
3. A rise or fall in temperature; usually there is a sudden fall.
4. The pulse will be quickened, and, as a rule, it is very small and rapid.
5. General signs of collapse, with an anxious, pinched expression of countenance.

In some rare cases there is vomiting.

Immediate surgical treatment would be needed, as laparotomy without delay is the only chance of saving life. The nurse should send for the medical man in attendance, and let him know the urgency of the case, that he may make arrangements with a surgeon to operate.

Very little can be done to relieve the patient temporarily. Hot fomentations very gently applied to the abdomen may give some relief, and the usual means of treating collapse, namely, warm blankets and hot-water bottles

to the feet. Absolute rest is essential. Should an operation be decided upon, the doctor will probably order a subcutaneous injection of morphia to be given, or tinct. opii, but till ordered this should never be given, as morphia, having the effect of masking symptoms, renders the diagnosis of perforation more difficult.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss F. M. Bayne, Mrs. J. E. Taylor, Miss F. Thompson, Mrs. Farthing.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

(a) What symptoms may be found in an infant who is suffering from congenital syphilis? (b) What symptoms may develop in a newborn infant if the mother is suffering from gonorrhœa?

THE VALUE OF PERSONALITY IN MENTAL WORK.

At the recent meeting held to discuss "The Duty of the Church to Mentally Afflicted," Dr. Maurice Craig dealt with "The Value of Personality in Mental Work." After briefly outlining the mind and how it may be disordered, he said, "You will now appreciate how important it is to have understanding and sympathetic persons to treat and nurse those that require such help.

"A physician or nurse, to be successful must have many attributes. Given the proper medical training, which is of course essential:

"(a) One must be intensely human, with a knowledge of the frailties and difficulties of mankind. Good people often annul their work by want of mercy.

"(b) One must know much of the religions of the world, and how they affect the outlook of the individual. (In parenthesis let me clear away an erroneous idea—that religion may cause insanity; after twenty-five years' experience I can honestly say that I have never known such a case. Religion may be used by the patient to explain an altered mental state—*vide* depression.)

"(c) The faculty of throwing oneself into another's place, and this must be sincere. As in everything else in life, the elimination of self is all-important. The patient is everything.

"(d) Infinite patience. A restful manner. A quiet and persuasive way of doing things. The impatient person wearies herself, while doing little or no good to the one she seeks to benefit. It is of no use telling the person to ignore or

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)