

### OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

- (a) WHAT SYMPTOMS MAY BE FOUND IN AN INFANT WHO IS SUFFERING FROM CONGENITAL SYPHILIS?  
 (b) WHAT SYMPTOMS MAY DEVELOP IN A NEW-BORN INFANT IF THE MOTHER IS SUFFERING FROM GONORRHOEA?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss R. Gleazer, Maternity Hospital, Union Infirmary, Lisburn Road, Belfast.

#### PRIZE PAPER.

(a) Congenital syphilis may cause:—

- (1) The abortion of a dead macerated foetus, usually about the sixth month.
- (2) The child may be born at full term dead, or may live a few hours. Such infants are small, shrivelled, have a hoarse cry, and get attacks of cyanosis.
- (3) It may be born fairly well-nourished, but showing signs of the disease, such as skin eruptions, or
- (4) It may be born well-nourished, and showing no sign of the disease whatever, until the end of four or six weeks. In the latter class a typical case is found.

The principal symptoms are:—

- (1) The infant cries, and is wakeful at night, due, no doubt, to periosteal pain.
- (2) There is catarrh of the nose, accompanied by a watery-looking discharge, which irritates and excoriates the nares and upper lip. The discharge becomes purulent, and forms crusts, which block up the nares. The catarrh causes difficult breathing, and produces one of the earliest symptoms of syphilis, namely, "snuffles."
- (3) Skin eruptions of a papular or erythematous kind begin to appear about the anus, the genitals, the buttocks, the palms, and soles. The rash is a bright red, and fades to the "lean ham" tint. Later it has a characteristic shining and polished-looking appearance. It may spread to the body generally, but it is always best marked on the parts subject to irritation. Psoriasis may appear on the hands and soles, and on the face.

Condylomata are common about the corners of the mouth, the anus, the folds of the groin, or at the side of the nose, and are caused by irritation. Sometimes they result in ulceration at the corners of the mouth, and produce deep fissures known as "rhagades," which leave permanent white cicatrices.

Pemphigus sometimes appear during the first or second week on the palms, and soles, or other parts of the hands and feet. The bullæ are surrounded by a red zone, or they appear on a dusky red, slightly elevated base. Their contents are purulent or bloody, or may be both.

- (4) Wasting and anæmia begin about the end

of the first month, and continue for an indefinite period. The skin gradually loses its healthy look, and becomes a faint yellow, or straw-colour tint. It loses its elasticity, is dry, and hangs in folds, producing the "old man" appearance.

(5) Necrosis of the nasal bones is frequent, and gives rise to falling in of the bridge of the nose. The distal ends of the long bones become affected. The swelling is tender, movement causes pain, the limbs hang uselessly by the side, and the muscles begin to waste.

Later symptoms are:—

- (1) Keratitis (inflammation of the cornea).
- (2) The teeth are misshapen, the upper central incisors being dwarfed, peg-shaped, and notched (known as "Hutchinson's teeth").
- (3) Deafness without otitis comes on at the same time as keratitis.
- (4) Chronic synovitis of both knee joints is not uncommon.
- (5) The hair is unusually long, straight, fine, and very dark, and is known as the "syphilitic wig."

(6) Perforation of the palate may result.

(b) If the mother is suffering from gonorrhœa, ophthalmia neonatorum is frequently seen. The gonococcus becomes inoculated during the child's progress through the paturient canal. When infection thus arises, the disease develops on the second or third day after birth. It is not uncommon to see the disease starting in one eye, but quite the exception to find it remaining localized for many days; as a rule both eyes are soon involved.

The infection may be conveyed indirectly by the hands of the mother or nurse, if great care is not exercised regarding aseptis.

The first symptom noticed is redness and swelling of the lids and conjunctivæ, accompanied by a profuse watery discharge, which quickly becomes purulent. The amount of pus discharged is enormous, and often the mouth and nose become affected, giving rise to stomatitis and rhinitis. A general infection of the system may take place, or the symptoms of gonorrhœal rheumatism may appear. If the case is neglected, and medical advice not obtained early, the discharge, which spreads rapidly, may cause perforation of the cornea, resulting in total blindness.

The treatment should therefore begin when "there is any inflammation of the eyes, however slight." It usually consists in first thoroughly cleansing the eyes with warm sterile water, and then instilling into the conjunctival sac a few drops of a solution of silver nitrate (10 gr. to 1 oz.). This is called Crede's method.

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