

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT COMPLICATIONS WOULD YOU WATCH FOR IN NURSING AN AGED PATIENT WITH FRACTURE OF FEMUR? DESCRIBE THE NURSING OF SUCH COMPLICATIONS.

We have much pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Marion Zeigler, 105, Warwick Avenue, Maida Vale, W.

PRIZE PAPER.

A fracture of the femur occurring in an aged patient is a serious condition which calls for the *very best* a nurse can give. It not only demands her skill and good nursing, but that gentleness and kindly patient manner which means so much to old people who are essentially sensitive in their helpless state, with nerves very badly shaken owing to the breaking of the limb.

The chief complications to watch for are:—(1) bed sores; (2) a low form of pneumonia called "hypostatic," due to the patient being constantly in a recumbent position; (3) gangrene; (4) paralysis; (5) septic complications.

The above mentioned are to be watched for in every case of a fractured femur, and preventive treatment should be carried out from the beginning. But in spite of all care one or more of the complications may occur, and each symptom must be treated as it appears.

Bed Sores.—We must first consider their prevention. A water pillow is almost a necessity, over which a draw sheet is placed, which must be kept always dry and clean, straight, and free from crumbs. Pressure must be avoided on all prominences, by means of a bed cradle and soft small pillows placed in such a way as to prevent pressure on the heels, hips, ankles and elbows. The parts exposed to pressure, especially the back, should be well rubbed with soap applied with the palm of the hand, dried carefully with a soft towel, and then rubbed with methylated spirit or Eau de Cologne, and dusted with zinc and starch powder. If the skin threatens to give way a bed sore may be averted by painting with flexile collodion and removing, if possible, all pressure from the area involved. The back should be attended to every four hours. Should a bed sore form, it must at once be reported to the medical attendant, and his directions carried out. Failing explicit directions, it should be carefully dressed with a stimulant and antiseptic lotion or ointment, and any slough removed by the application of boracic fomentations.

Hypostatic Pneumonia.—This is very apt to occur in very old people, and is caused by the

stagnation of the blood at the bases of the lungs, mainly because of the unvaried position together with the feeble action of the heart. Careful record of the temperature, pulse and respiration must be taken and reported to the surgeon, who probably may order an expectorant medicine such as Mist. Senegæ. Co. to relieve the congestion. The patient's position should be changed as much as the fractured limb will permit. Brandy may also be ordered.

Gangrene.—Gangrene may occur as the result of an injury of the blood vessels received at the same time as the fracture, or it may be due to tight bandaging or, in old people, to the degeneration of blood vessels. Sometimes the bandage is properly applied but the limb swells so much that it becomes congested. The signs of threatened gangrene are: Pain, swelling, blueness, coldness of parts below the bandage with loss of pulse. If this condition exists the surgeon must be informed immediately and the bandages removed.

Paralysis.—This may occur from an injury of the nerves sustained at the time of the fracture, or can be caused by the pressure of improperly padded splints. Massage may be given to stimulate and restore function to the part.

Septic Complications of all kinds may occur with a compound fracture. Of these the most important are osteo-myelitis (septic inflammation of the bone) and pyæmia. In the less acute condition of sepsis a small piece of the bone dies and has to be removed from the wound. In the very early stages of this complication an injection of anti-streptococci serum may have good results. The former condition is most serious of all, and in order to save the patient's life it may be necessary to amputate the limb, although an old person may die from exhaustion and absorption of the toxins.

A very common fracture liable to occur in old people is a fracture of the neck of the femur, often called intra capsular fracture, due to very slight causes such as slipping off the edge of the pavement. The round head of the bone snaps off from the neck and lies loose in the joint.

The Hodgen's Splint, which allows the patient to sit up and so obviates the complication of pneumonia is often used for this fracture.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention: Miss D. J. Goddard, Miss E. E. Please, Miss Henrietta Ballard, Miss Winifred Appleton, Miss Marjorie Pack.

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