

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL COUNTER-IRRITANTS, AND HOW ARE THEY APPLIED?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss E. Garland, Ministry of Pensions Hospital, Maghull, near Liverpool.

PRIZE PAPER.

Mustard plaster, iodine, liniments, blisters, croton oil, actual cautery, leeches, cupping.

Mustard plaster.—This is stronger than a mustard poultice, and usually more convenient. Care should be taken not to burn the patient. Boracic and starch powder should be applied when plaster is removed, and part covered with cotton wool.

Blisters (cantharides).—This can be applied as a plaster or painted on the part. If fluid is used, a ring of olive oil or vaseline should be smeared round the part to prevent running down and blistering surrounding skin; two or three coats should be applied.

A plaster should be cut exact size required, the part washed with soap and water and sponged with ether, plaster moistened with warm water and applied, secured in place by wool and bandage and left ten hours for adult, five hours for a child; ointment usually required for dressing.

Croton oil.—Very little used; powerful. Two to four drops rubbed into the part with a piece of flannel.

Iodine.—Painted on with a camel-hair brush. One coat allowed to remain to dry before another is applied.

Liniment.—Only a mild counter irritant; to be rubbed into part affected.

Actual cautery.—Occasionally used, and worked by electricity.

Leeches.—These are used for drawing off small quantities of blood. The part must be washed with soap and water, and friction used to draw the blood to surface; put the leech in a test tube and apply over the part; let the leech hang as long as it will, and do not drag it off; the leech bites should be washed and covered with cotton wool. If oozing is troublesome, a little ice will usually stop it. Occasionally it cannot be checked, when medical advice must be obtained. Elderly people should be watched after the use of leeches. Never apply a leech over a large blood-vessel.

Cupping.—For this there are required cupping-glasses of various sizes, blotting-paper, methylated spirit, a little oil, a scarifier. The air must be exhausted from the cupping-glasses by placing a piece of blotting-paper

wetted with a few drops of spirit in the bottom of the glass, and then igniting it. The glass should be warmed first. Apply quickly to the selected spot, but first smear the edges with oil. The skin swells up within the glass. In wet cupping a scarifier is first applied to the spot, whereby several cuts are produced; the cupping-glass is then applied as in dry cupping, when a certain quantity of blood is drawn into the glass. The wound should be dressed with a dry dressing.

A counter-irritant is a local application, and always used for the relief of pain and to promote the absorption of inflammatory products. The same effect is produced by counter-irritants as by baths in a lesser degree; also by irritation of the peripheral nerves. They may ease deep-seated pain. For instance, a mustard leaf, applied to the back of the neck, may relieve a severe headache.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Linda M. Smith, Miss Henrietta Ballard, Miss P. Thomson, Miss F. Burns.

Miss Henrietta Ballard writes: "Counter irritants may be of three classes:—

"1. *Rubefaciens*, just sufficient to induce redness of the skin, as fomentations, poulticing, painting with iodine, and stupes and plasters.

"2. *Vesicants*.—These redden the skin, but also produce blisters, such as blistering fluids and plasters and ammonia, strong solutions of iodine, or liniments of mustard, croton oil, &c.

"3. *Pustulants*.—Under this heading one can place nitrate of silver and other strong irritants not in common use.

"Strong liniment, solutions of croton oil, ammonia, and belladonna are in use, and these need just painting on as for blistering fluid, but blistering may not be necessary.

"The more common irritants used are fomentations, to which turpentine is added. The safest way of using turpentine on flannel is by adding 3 iv to vi of turpentine to Oi of boiling water, stir and pour on flannel fomentation cloth placed in a dry wringer, wring and apply to part; cover with jaconet and wool, and apply bandage or a binder."

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What congenital defects may be present in newly born infants, and how are they usually treated? What are the toxæmias of infancy, and what are their causes?

NOTICE.

Will competitors kindly observe the rule that paper must only be written upon on one side?

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