

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

### HOW MAY THE TRAINED NURSE HELP IN THE SEX EDUCATION OF THE CHILD?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Mrs. Firth Scott, 231, Ladbroke Grove, W.10.

#### PRIZE PAPER.

The first essential is that the Trained Nurse shall herself know enough about sex and sex hygiene to enable her to guide others when the need for guidance is apparent. Nurses see much of the pathological side of sex, manifesting in various neuroses, psychoses, and morbid conditions directly or indirectly traceable to some disturbance or abnormality of the harmonious sexual rhythm of the individual. It is doubtful if the majority of nurses realise the *origin* of these pathological conditions. The laws governing the digestive, circulatory, respiratory, and nervous systems are taught, but those relating to the reproductive system are largely ignored or else alluded to in a shamed sort of apology for their very existence. Gradually the morass of ignorance into which this type of "morality" (?) has led us is being realised, and some enlightened parents are willing and anxious that their children shall grow up with cleaner, saner ideas of sex than they had themselves. The nurse must work in harmony with the parents if she is to impart any useful sex education to the child. If there is not a mutual understanding on the subject the best efforts of the nurse will be nullified.

Teaching the child absolute cleanliness and niceness with regard to its organs of reproduction will help to imbue it with the idea of their sacredness. Explain, "That part of the body is very sacred and is not shown or talked about like the other parts, but that when the child grows up it will understand, and be glad that it always took care to be very clean." Encourage regular daily habits, sleeping on a hard bed, use of cold water if the child is strong. If possible give simple lessons in botany, with special attention to the reproductive system of plants. The keeping of pets, e.g., rabbits, cats and kittens, will be of use in helping older children to observe the natural functions of animals, and so, by analogy, their minds will work round to their own bodies. Never tell a child an untruth about sex. If asked a question which you feel cannot be answered fully at the time, tell the child that he is not quite old enough, but that you will answer the question when he is big enough to understand.

Make the whole subject of sex as beautiful and as romantic as possible, but always in accordance with actual fact. If a child asks a direct question as to where it came from it is surely better to tell it the truth in an idealised way than to tell it "The doctor brought you in his bag!" Why not say directly something like this: "Your Mummie and Daddy loved each other so much, they wanted a little baby as a remembrance of it. So God let you come to them for their very own little girl (boy). But at first you would not have been able to live in the cold air, so for many months Mummie carried you inside her and kept you safe and warm whilst you grew to be a big, strong baby—like the seeds are kept in the flower till they are ready to grow by themselves. You gave your Mummie pain when you were big enough to be born, but she soon forgot it, because she loved you. And then she gave you milk from her breasts, just in the same way that your cat gives milk to her little kitten, until you were so strong you could eat by yourself like you do now. But all this is so beautiful; it is your 'secret' with Mummie and Daddy, and you don't talk to everybody about it. And when you grow up you will understand more about it, and perhaps you, too, will have a dear little baby then." Treating natural things naturally in this way will prevent the child trying to pierce what it would otherwise instinctively feel was a deception. When one looks at the horrors which have arisen, largely owing to lack of true sexual knowledge and to false modesty, one feels tempted to wonder if, after all, we have progressed very much farther than some of the so-called Pagan races of the world, who exalted sex to the extent of the Phallic worship which was the religion of ancient Egypt, for example. They at least recognised it as a great driving-force, and attempted to control and direct it into the channels their experience taught them was best; whereas we have the White Slave Traffic!

#### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Mena M. G. Bielby, Miss P. Thomson, Miss Jane James, Miss E. Robinson.

Miss M. Bielby writes: "All the information on this subject given to children must be *scientific*, so as to form a groundwork for more advanced thinking, and they should learn early that the sex nature has a spiritual side."

#### QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Name four diseases to which children are liable, and the nursing treatment.

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