

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A MOTHER IF YOU NOTICED CHILDREN WITH IMPETIGO IN A HOUSE YOU WERE ATTENDING (a) TO REMEDY THE CHILDREN ALREADY INFECTED, (b) TO PREVENT SPREAD OF INFECTION?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Mrs. Jean M. Jepson, Philbeach Gardens, S.W.5.

PRIZE PAPER.

This disease will often come to the notice of the district nurse, as it is an extremely common complaint among poor children where dirt and neglect are prevalent. Though extremely infectious, it is fortunately one of the easiest skin diseases to cure, that is, if the treatment be carried out carefully and systematically. Its contagiousness has been proved in schools where Rugby football is played, when epidemics occasionally break out; it is then known as "football itch" or "scrum-pox." The nurse must thoroughly understand the nature and course of the disease, so that she may give adequate advice. Of the several varieties, Impetigo contagiosa is the commonest form; it affects chiefly the scalp and face. The sufferer, however, invariably infects himself from the original sore, and a great extent of the body may be infected. At the outset the pustules may be mistaken for chicken-pox, but owing to interferences these rapidly merge into a large confluent sore, which may extend over the scalp or round the mouth and chin; if not treated septic poisoning may result, the neighbouring lymphatic glands may swell and suppurate, and serious consequences arise.

It must be impressed on the mother that the disease is no trifling complaint, and that immediate treatment is necessary; in some cases hospital treatment should be advised.

When the scalp is infected pediculi or nits are generally present; these must be sought for and removed, and the hair cut close to the head. It is useless to attempt to treat the sores without first removing the scabs, a mistake which is frequently made. They can, however, be easily removed by bathing and soaking with olive oil, or by boracic or starch fomentations, the part can then be dressed with a prescribed ointment, which, in the case of the scalp, may be spread on lint or linen and bandaged in position. A weak mercurial ointment, *e.g.*, 5 grains of ammoniated mercury to $\frac{1}{2}$ i of vaseline is best, stronger antiseptics have been proved inadvisable. The face and other portions of the body are perhaps easier to treat. When the scabs form they must not be removed too readily; in about 24 hours they become very

loosely adherent, and when removed the skin beneath is merely reddened; if separated before the scab is completely dry the skin is still moistened with pus.

With small children it may be necessary to splint the arms and bandage the hands to prevent them from scratching. Attention to the general health is necessary, the bowels should be made to act regularly, a nourishing diet must be given, and tonics or cod-liver oil are almost always necessary to increase the power of resistance.

With regard to the other inmates of the house, the mother must be told to isolate those infected as far as possible; all linen, towels, feeding utensils, washing basins, baths, &c., used for those infected must be kept rigidly for them, and not used for other members of the family; she must be taught to disinfect her hands before going from one child to another. As each patient is cured he must have a final bath and a fresh set of clothing; everything used by him must be thoroughly disinfected. It is advisable to send bedding to be fumigated.

It must be borne in mind that impetigo acts as a mask to scabies, so the possibility of its presence must not be overlooked, as a course of special treatment for that disease would then be necessary.

Dr. Whitla points out in his Dictionary of Treatment that "as there is always some considerable departure from health upon which the pustular eruption depends, the treatment should be directed to the same cause. The diet should be plain and nutritious without being too stimulating. Fresh air, exercise, and every means by which the standard of health can be raised should not be neglected. Anæmia, constipation, dyspepsia and other troubles are to be met with appropriate remedies; and tonics, with cod-liver oil and malt extract, are afterwards given.

"Locally the treatment may be rationally carried out by regarding the disease as if it were a purulent eczema."

He further recommends that after the crusts are removed the hair should be cut close, and an ointment consisting of one part of white precipitate ointment and three parts of zinc ointment should be freely applied.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss P. Thomson, Miss M. James, Miss D. Morton.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What are the three principal methods of feeding infants? What are the symptoms of over-feeding, and what are the results?

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