

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

GIVE SOME PRACTICAL HINTS ON THE APPLICATION OF PLASTER CASTS,

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Amy Phipps, Council Office, South Street, Romford.

PRIZE PAPER.

The ultimate success of the application of a plaster cast depends to a great extent upon the skill and experience of all those assisting in the operation. In consequence, special tuition in this branch of work ought always to be given in training schools, to enable the nurse to do her necessary part in obtaining good results.

Some practical points in connection with plaster work will include the following:—

1. The person in charge of the preparations and operation should see that each assistant knows what is expected of her in detail. This is particularly important in connection with holding a limb which is to be plastered. The one to whom this duty is allotted must commence her part in such a position that will cause the minimum of fatigue, for this is always an onerous task, and, as is well known, any movement after the work has well commenced may mean that it is rendered valueless. She must hold the limb, therefore, exactly as she is directed, and must give her whole attention to maintaining the same position as long as necessary.

2. Everything needed must be in readiness before the work is commenced, and this will depend, to a certain extent, upon the wishes and uses of the particular surgeon, and upon the part to be plastered. Success depends to a great extent upon quick and prompt work. The things to be in readiness will probably include:—Soap and water, spirit and powder and shaving necessities to prepare the part; cotton-wool and domette bandages (or a woollen stocking may be preferred), needle and thread, plaster of Paris and butter muslin or prepared plaster bandages, plenty of hot and cold water, bowls, sheets to protect floor and bed (these are usually kept for the purpose where much plastering is done), rubber gloves, vaseline, a sharp scalpel and dissecting forceps, liquid paraffin and coloured lead pencil. In addition, if there is a wound, a dressing must be in readiness, and exact measurements of the part where a "window" is to be made for dressing the wound must be recorded.

3. The plaster or plaster bandages must be fresh and perfectly dry, must have been stored in air-tight tins, and must be handled care-

fully to prevent losing the plaster of Paris from them; a large supply should be close at hand, but should be kept out of the actual field of operation. After application, all edges should be trimmed, a "window" cut if necessary, and all edges sealed with plaster cream. The cast is usually painted with liquid paraffin to prevent soiling and absorption, especially in connection with children. Previous to this, the whole cast is rubbed well with plaster cream on a pladget of wool, to fill any surface cracks. If the plaster cast is to be hinged and laced, it must be cut through at one side and partly through on the other, and holes punched for lacing before it is completely dry. For this kind of cast, house flannel cut to shape is always used.

The date of application and plasterer's initials are usually written in coloured lead on the completed cast.

4. The plasterer and assistants will find it useful to vaseline the hands, and, if desired, to wear strong rubber gloves. Frequent plaster work has a deleterious effect upon the hands, which is very undesirable.

5. The cast must not be dried near a fire, otherwise it will crack.

An expert plasterer with good materials will often make a light cast, yet strong enough for almost any purpose, which will dry almost as quickly as it is applied.

6. Stand the plaster bandages in warm water, on end, until bubbles cease to form, then carefully lift them out and hand to the plasterer; have the next always ready immediately when needed. The powder must be free from lumps.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss P. James, Miss J. Evans, Miss Mary O'Brien, Miss F. Anderson.

Miss P. James writes: "Although the application of plaster of Paris is a simple matter, easily performed, various *contretemps* may occur if care is not exercised. The plaster bandages may have been soaked too long and become hard and useless; they may not have been soaked long enough, in which case the plaster is liable to fall out. If the crinoline of which the bandages are made is not carefully selected, it may not 'take' the plaster. Furthermore, the probationer, if not warned, may put the unused 'cream' down the sink, and so plug the pipes."

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

When a child is in a state of apparent asphyxia, describe how you would endeavour to establish regular respiration.

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