

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS," "NEURITIS," AND "RHEUMATISM"?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Henrietta Ballard, Bermondsey Hospital, Lower Road, Rotherhithe, S.E.

#### PRIZE PAPER.

*Rheumatoid Arthritis* is caused by the absorption into the system of septic organisms, usually from decayed teeth or disease of the gums and mouth.

The disease is not usually very acute, but produces ulceration, destruction, and hypertrophy of the joints, and does not respond to drugs, such as soda salicylate. The muscles become atrophied, and the joints painful and swollen, resulting in enlargement and stiffness of same.

The disease usually attacks middle-aged women, and may produce just stiffness of the smaller joints or may cause extensive crippling from stiffness of large joints.

It is a disease which does not readily respond to treatment, but does not seem to shorten life.

In the more acute forms elevation of temperature is produced, with emaciation and anæmia following, but it is usually a chronic condition.

Treatment consists in removing septic condition causing the disease, nourishing, digestible diet, warm climate if possible, and baths or massage allow of a little more movement to the affected joints in favourable cases.

*Neuritis* is inflammation of a nerve; it may be acute or chronic, local or multiple, and may attack any nerve.

It may be caused by injury, pressure, or from some disease or poisoning of the system. It usually produces much pain, which is more acute at night in the area of distribution of the affected nerve or nerves, and consequently any muscles supplied by these lose their power and become flabby and functionless.

It attacks any persons and at any age, but usually middle-aged people.

The first symptom complained of is pain and a deadness of the part affected, with loss of function.

Treatment given locally, such as counter-irritation, may give relief, or operative treatment may be necessary to stretch or sever a nerve, or massage and electricity may cure the condition.

*Rheumatism*, in its severe form, is a very acute non-contagious fever, occurring most frequently between the ages of fifteen and thirty, and is due to some infective agent,

usually caused by exposure to damp or cold. The micro-organism, a "diplococcus," gains entrance into the system, causing a sore throat or form of tonsillitis, with malaise and chilliness, the joints becoming affected by the organism getting into the synovial membrane.

The joints affected become excruciatingly painful, very swollen, hot, and tender. Temperature is high, often hyperpyrexia being present. Perspiration is profuse, and of a characteristic acid odour.

Urine scanty and loaded with urates.

The joint affection is very erratic, may move from one knee to the other, or to an arm.

Relapses are very common, and the patient is liable to one at any time.

Danger is chiefly of cardiac trouble supervening, or as a complication of acute rheumatism.

Treatment. — Locally warmth, generally complete rest in recumbent position; the drug soda salicylate has a specific action on rheumatism.

The acute stage usually begins to subside in a fortnight, but cardiac symptoms may not show themselves until some weeks after attack.

Hyperpyrexia may need sponging or baths to relieve same, and is often very troublesome, but collapse must always be watched for, and baths only given by order of medical attendant.

#### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Mrs. C. Williams, Miss Rachel Dodd, Miss M. Jenkins, Miss P. Thomson, Miss N. James.

Mrs. Catherine Williams writes:—*Rheumatism* is an acute non-contagious fever, and generally thought to be due to some infective agent.

The predisposing cause is usually due to exposure to cold and wet; the disease may be hereditary.

*Symptoms.*—The disease is usually preceded by headache, sore throat, shivering, and malaise. The onset may be gradual or sudden; one or more joints may then become affected, which are swollen and tender, the pain becoming more aggravated on movement. The skin over the joint may be slightly inflamed. The inflammation may leave one joint suddenly, and appear in another.

The perspiration is profuse and acid, and has an unpleasant odour.

#### QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Explain the effect high altitudes (e.g., the Alps) would have on a patient with a weak heart.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)