

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

DESCRIBE THE PRINCIPAL USES OF BATHS, SOME OF THE VARIETIES KNOWN TO YOU, AND THE METHODS OF ADMINISTERING THEM.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Mrs. Firth Scott, Overstream, Osmington Mills, Weymouth.

### PRIZE PAPER.

Baths are used for cleansing and for therapeutic purposes chiefly. The latter may be (a) sedative, (b) stimulating, (c) medicated, (d) local or general.

*Sedative baths* may be used to relax the muscles, increase the amount of blood under the skin and so decrease mental activity, and reduce the stimulation of nerve centres generally. Besides using these as a sedative for the central nervous system, warm baths are used to allay peripheral irritation, *e.g.*, in the treatment of burns. The general sedative bath is invaluable in the treatment of insomnia, cases of mania or delirium, and to allay nervous exhaustion. Baths given for a sedative effect ought to be kept at body temperature or a little under, given in a quiet and preferably darkened room. The duration will be prescribed by the doctor, and may vary from half an hour to the continuous bath used in cases of burns. The great thing is to keep the patient as comfortable and as quiet as possible during the bath, and to get him dried and into bed with the least delay subsequently. In any long continued bath it is necessary to let the feet reach the end of the bath and give a support to the head and shoulders, *e.g.*, a band of flannelette beneath the shoulders and an air pillow for the head. A bath blanket can also be laid along the bottom of the bath to make it softer to lie on. The bath should be covered over after the patient is in it, with a blanket to prevent too rapid cooling. In the continuous baths used for burns, boric acid or bicarbonate of soda is usually added to the water and the skin smeared with some form of antiseptic ointment before the immersion. If the burns are very extensive, a hammock will be necessary to facilitate moving the patient.

*Stimulating baths* may depend on salts, *e.g.*, the Nauheim and Carlsbad; mustard; spray baths; heat or cold—heat may be electric or hot water. The *mustard bath* is usually given between 96° and 100° F. If the mustard is put in water much above 100° F., the volatile oil (which acts as the counter irritant) is driven off, and the effect will be diminished. *Spray baths* are usually given cold and accompanied by brisk skin friction. *Cold baths*, or sponging,

drive the blood from the surface vessels into the interior ones and assist in the more rapid oxidation of the blood. They stimulate the nerve endings in the skin, congestion of the internal organs is lessened, and the nutrition of the skin improved. The subsequent "reaction" will usually cause sweating if the patient is warmly wrapped in bed and given hot drinks; thus temperature may be lowered in fevers. An ice-cap should be applied to the patient's head when giving cold baths. Cold packs are used for the same purposes as cold baths. *Hot baths*, or packs, increase the surface blood supply and also relieve internal congestion. As the large amount of blood in the skin comes in contact with the hot water (or hot air) it becomes heated, and as it flows back to the interior oxidation is again favoured. This, and the fact that little or no heat is eliminated through the skin, causes a rise of temperature *pro tem.*; but as soon as the heat is discontinued diaphoresis will be induced, and as the sweat evaporates the increased loss of heat will cause the temperature to fall again. Heat may be locally applied, *e.g.*, to an arm or leg to cause softening and expansion of fibrous tissue such as ligaments, to relax stiff muscles, and hyperemia. The hyperemia of a special part will cause an increase in the number of anti-toxic substances in the local blood-vessels, an increase in the amount of blood serum exuding into the tissues, and eventually a better circulation of blood and lymph. Hot baths may be of water, hot air, vapour, electric light, and sun baths. *Sun baths* are becoming more and more valued as prophylactic and curative agencies. Our misty climate is not ideal for them, and a special burner called "The Alpine Sun Lamp" has been devised as a substitute when the real sun refuses to shine on us—or we shut him out with smoke screens. Rickets and tuberculosis appear to yield marvellously to treatment by heliotherapy. The patients should wear shady hats to avoid eye strain when having sun baths.

*Medicated baths* are baths to which any kind of drug has been added, *e.g.*, boric acid, sulphur, bran, sodium bicarbonate, carbolic. They will be prescribed by a doctor.

In all local baths care must be taken that only the part to be treated is wet; that there is no undue strain on the rest of the body; and that the bath cannot be easily upset by a chance movement of the patient.

In all general baths care must be taken to disturb the patients as little as possible, not to agitate them by exposure or any clumsiness, to time the bath carefully, and to keep the tem-

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