

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY A DIPHTHERIA CARRIER? WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND HOW ARE THEY TO BE GUARDED AGAINST?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss M. E. Thorpe, Waldene, Farnham.

### PRIZE PAPER.

A diphtheria carrier is a person or animal who retains the Klebs-Loeffler bacillus in the air passages without necessarily having, or having had, diphtheria. Among animals, cats are frequently said to carry diphtheria. Most probably they contract the disease, and having nine lives, they recover without treatment, and retain the bacillus. A carrier who has not had the disease is often, strangely enough, a child who is termed delicate, sometimes, of course, an adult. A person who has diphtheria, and afterwards retains the bacillus in the air passages for a long period after recovery, is usually one with large tonsils, or adenoids, or one with a history of nasal catarrh. Defective teeth may also be a source of danger.

It is usual in a fever hospital to obtain three negative swabs of the nose and throat of a patient before he is discharged after having had diphtheria. It is known that children suffering from scarlet fever often have diphtheria also. It would be a good plan, therefore, to take swabs from these throats also. There are probably numerous mild cases of diphtheria which are never detected. If all defects of the air passages were treated, there would be very little danger of carrying diseases.

1. Enlarged or ragged tonsils, which are continually becoming inflamed and septic, are very damaging to the general health, besides being a resting-place for bacteria. There are various preparations in use for painting them. These should always be prescribed by a doctor. If this treatment fails to reduce them, they should be removed by enucleation.

2. Adenoids are unhealthy, glandular tissue, and grow in the post-nasal pharynx. They are a danger in many ways, besides being a harbour for bacteria. The breathing becomes obstructed, and the air, instead of becoming filtered and warmed in the nasal passages, strikes directly on to the tonsils. A person suffering from adenoids eventually becomes mentally dull and stupid, owing to insufficient oxidation; they are also liable to bronchitis, catarrh, and deafness.

3. Chronic nasal catarrh must be treated thoroughly and continually until cured. If

allowed to continue the smooth superficial mucus membrane becomes damaged and destroyed, leaving a roughened surface, which naturally harbours bacteria. The usual treatment is by inhaling antiseptic lotions, and by vaccines.

4. Nasal polypi should be removed. These are innocent growths usually attached to the middle turbinate bones. They are very easily removed without an anæsthetic.

5. Decayed teeth are a very dangerous resting-place for bacteria, and are also very unpleasant and unhealthy. Even if they are sound they may harbour bacteria, and should therefore be brushed regularly. It is really extraordinary how careless people are in this direction among the poorer classes. Quite a small percentage of children in the elementary schools clean their teeth. Certainly false teeth for the wife of a labouring man are a great problem owing to the expense. Even to have a tooth filled is a great expense, especially in a country district. It is difficult to persuade them that no tooth is better than a decayed one. It is also difficult to persuade them to have their children's teeth attended to, in spite of the fact that the school authorities undertake to do them for a very small fee.

### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss M. M. Quilter, Miss M. Ramsey, Miss B. Jones, Miss N. James.

Miss M. M. Quilter writes: "The term diphtheria carrier is applied to a person suffering from bacteriological diphtheria; *i.e.*, Klebs-Loeffler bacilli are harboured in the mucous membrane of the throat or nose, having no ill-effect upon the person who carries them.

The bacilli can only be observed by bacteriological or microscopical examination of material collected from the part affected, and may be virulent or non-virulent. Owing to the inactivity of the germs the carrier may be quite unaware of his condition until cases of diphtheria have been traced to him, the condition being very contagious, and often extending over a very long period."

Miss Mary Ramsey writes:—"Isolation of all persons harbouring the diphtheria bacillus is advised until three successful negative results have been obtained on application of the bacteriological test. It is important to examine the nose as well as the throat, for in the condition known as chronic membranous rhinitis, the bacillus may give rise to little or no constitutional disturbance."

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