

Medical Matters.

THE INFLUENCE OF FEEDING IN THE TREATMENT OF TYPHOID.



Dr. J. T. C. Nash, writing in the *British Medical Journal* on the subject of the influence of feeding in typhoid fever, says: "Briefly, I argue that when a patient is in the typical typhoid state, with dry mouth and parched tongue, it is practically certain that all the natural digestive ferments are at a low ebb.

The dry mouth excludes starchy food. The diminution in amount and activity of the gastric and intestinal juices indicates that only liquid articles capable of rapid absorption should be given. This, in my opinion, should exclude ordinary milk, which we know by analogy, from our experience with infantile diarrhoea, is not properly digested in acute bacterial intestinal intoxications, but leaves the stomach and enters the intestinal tract in a partially solid, acid, irritating form.

"In short, it is of the utmost importance to remember that, even under normal physiological processes, milk becomes in part a solid food in the healthy stomach, and must therefore necessarily be rather an irritative food in acute bacterial intestinal inflammation. This objection does not apply to whey, which is suitable alike for infantile diarrhoea and typhoid fever. On the other hand, when the mouth and tongue are moist, the teeth in good condition, and the salivary function not in abeyance, there can be no sound physiological objection to allowing a little stale, well-boiled bread crumbs, or even stale bread and butter, provided mastication is enforced, because the solid bread is rapidly converted into sugar in a state of solution, and does not enter the intestines in a solid form at all. In fact, very little of it even reaches the intestines, and none would remain unconverted long before the usual seat of typhoidal lesions was reached."

Dr. Nash agrees with other medical authorities as to the general inadmissibility of milk, and the clear indications for whey in the treatment of the early and middle stages of typhoid fever. On the other hand, he allows bread or fish before the temperature has definitely settled, directly there is sufficient saliva being secreted to convert the bread starch into dissolved sugar, or sufficient gastric juice to deal satisfactorily with small quantities of fish. After some further remarks he goes on to say: "Unfortunately the text-books in general almost universally name milk as the staple

diet for typhoid fever. In my own opinion and experience it is an inappropriate food for typhoid fever because of the large, firm, cheesy curds formed in the intestines. I can recall more than one case coming under my care, most seriously ill with high temperature, and distended abdomen, and with all the symptoms of malignancy of attack. My first treatment on learning that the diet hitherto has been milk is to administer a few grains (two to four) of calomel followed up by two drachms of castor oil, at the same time administering a copious simple or oil enema. These methods generally result in the excretion of large quantities of irritating casein matters, and the general symptoms of acute poisoning immediately abate. The routine diet I prescribe as a rule during the height of the disease is whey, one beaten-up egg, and beef tea, including under the latter term all strained meat and vegetable soups.

"The effect of calomel is many-sided. It is partly expurgative and partly antiseptic, not only through its own intrinsic qualities, but by stimulating that natural intestinal antiseptic and secretion stimulator, the bile.

"Though it is impossible to sterilise the intestinal tract, antiseptics can be carried out to a considerable extent by virtue of such drugs as hydrarg. cum creta, gr. $\frac{1}{2}$ t.d.s., the chlorine mixture of Burney Yeo, acetozone, etc. The last mentioned can be given *ad libitum* if 20 gr. is freely diluted in a quart of water, thus securing also the enormous therapeutic value of large quantities of water."

The question of feeding in typhoid fever may be summed up in a sentence: "Judicious application of physiological principles." This involves the remembrance of the fact that milk becomes partly solid and bread liquid in the course of digestion.

THE SPREAD OF TROPICAL DISEASES.

Sir Patrick Manson, who was recently the guest of the evening at the monthly dinner of the African Society, said of the many African problems to be solved one of the most important was that of disease, for one thing which more than any other had made Africa a dark continent was the existence of so many curious and dangerous diseases, but for which Africa to-day, instead of being at the fag end in the race of civilisation, would be in the van. At one time all African diseases were included under the word 'malaria'; but since malaria had been studied scientifically it was found to include half-a-dozen diseases having absolutely different causes, producing absolutely different results, and requiring absolutely different treatment.

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