

AN INTERESTING CASE.

Since having had the sole charge and responsibility of a child I have realized much more the anxiety through which parents go, and also their utter helplessness in face of anything unusual happening to their children. I have wondered so many, many times why hundreds, possibly thousands, of books are devoted wholly to the feeding and care of infants, yet there are so few which deal with the child and the hundred and one things which are likely to arise and cause worry and anxiety to those responsible. It is on this account I record the following case. I fully realize that if the infant is not properly cared for, the chances are there will be no child, but after a delicate infant has been dragged through the shoals and quicksands of infancy one is usually left high and dry, with many records for the usual things which may occur, but no mention is made of the unusual but possible. Maybe when our nurses record more frequently their experiences, one of them will write a book on children sick and well, and deal with many things now left unrecorded.

This child came under my care when she was $2\frac{1}{2}$ years old; she had a very fair skin, which added to the delicacy of her appearance. I was led to understand she had always been difficult over her food, somewhat precocious and trying. Soon after she came she was medically examined, and pronounced sound but rather anæmic and thin. But experience soon proved that there was something decidedly wrong somewhere, and as the doctor declared she was right physically, we concluded (wrongfully, I now admit) it was moral, being assisted to that conclusion by the child being absolutely undisciplined. She had no idea whatever of obedience, and if she was called would promptly run away, expecting to be followed, caught, and played with. Our greatest trouble, however, was over her food. For weeks—six or eight maybe—things would go well, although the appetite was never keen.

At first, cream was tried, but was soon stopped, as it resulted in sickness. The meals were strictly on text-book lines: plenty of milk, fruit, &c., regular hours, nothing between meals, not many sweets or chocolates. Breakfast consisted of bread and milk or porridge and milk, bread-and-butter with stewed fruit or jam; dinner, meat, vegetables, milk pudding, fruit; supper, milk, bread-and-butter, jam or fruit, sweeties and chocolates after a meal, absolutely correct as per text-book.

After a few weeks bread-and-milk was objected to, and, if forced, tears and sickness resulted, but if the child was left alone and told she had to eat it, it was eaten, but very, very slowly, and retained. This would occur more or less at every meal for days, and was generally attributed to naughtiness, the argument being if there is something wrong with the digestion the food would not be retained anyhow, and if she could enjoy bread-and-milk last week, then there is no real antipathy to it, and when eaten, even if objected to, it is retained and digested. Then it was decided it must be obstinacy, as other food which text-books say are not good for children was refused to her, it appeared to be a case of "If I can't have what I want I won't have anything."

This would continue for days; the fit would pass, and for weeks there would be no further trouble.

All kinds of things were tried to improve the general health, such as Parrish's Food, Plasmone, cod-liver oil, Scott's emulsion, eggs, different combinations of malt, but the most successful was plain malt extract.

During the following years several doctors were consulted, with always the same result: organically sound, but anæmic; give her so and so, which prescription was tried with more or less the same lack of success. When she was $7\frac{1}{2}$ she was taken to Switzerland, and it was thought the change of air would surely put more red corpuscles into her blood and colour into her cheeks.

At first it seemed to do so, but after about two months the same trouble began, until, in desperation, it was decided to try a specialist. Dr. Combe, of Lausanne, was recommended as having a great reputation for the treatment of such cases.

To visit a specialist in Switzerland is not nearly the costly affair that it is in England, and although a 20-franc fee is there considered a great deal, it is very moderate compared with the two guineas at home. I can quite appreciate anyone saying, "Why not have consulted a specialist before?" True, but when at least four doctors tell one exactly the same story, one feels somewhat chary of spending guineas, especially when they are scarce.

An appointment was made with Dr. Combe, and his first comment on seeing the child was anæmia. Next the lungs and heart were pronounced sound. The child was next placed on a sofa and the abdomen examined, when quickly came the exclamation: "Ah! there's the trouble. An enlarged liver, which upsets all the digestive tract." What a relief that at

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)