

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT IS ANÆMIA? WHY IS DIET AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ITS TREATMENT?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss J. G. Gilchrist, 14, Gillespie Crescent, Edinburgh.

PRIZE PAPER.

Anæmia is a word signifying a condition of the blood in which there is a deficiency in quantity of the red corpuscles or in quality of the substance hæmoglobin in these cells. When the cause is due to some obscure disorder of the blood-making and blood-destroying tissues, it is called primary anæmia; diseases such as pernicious anæmia, chlorosis, and leukæmia are of this class. When the cause is known, preventible, and easily yielding to treatment, such as the result of hæmorrhage, breathing vitiated air, or due to auto-intoxication, it is termed secondary anæmia, and is much the commoner form generally met with.

Secondary anæmia, or "bloodlessness," as it is incorrectly but frequently termed by the patient and her friends, may be due to many causes. It may be due to prolonged overwork, and insufficient or indigestible food, producing a debilitated condition, also to digestive troubles and chronic constipation; breathing vitiated air, as in some factories, and sleeping in overcrowded, ill-ventilated rooms, is another potent cause. Loss of blood, or hæmorrhage, is a cause which may be very serious in its issue, more especially if there are repeated small losses of blood, as in hæmorrhoids. The presence of intestinal parasites is a cause noted in young children. Anæmia is also produced by the active toxin in the infectious fevers caused by bacteria. The symptoms of anæmia are generally manifested by pallor of the skin and mucous membranes, shortness of breath on exertion, indigestion or pain after eating, headache, loss of appetite, constipation, and loss of strength. In some cases the outward appearance and colouring of the patient may be deceptive to the untrained eye: thus, a patient may have palpitation and other symptoms, but remain fat and red-cheeked; also some healthy people have a peculiar pallor, which is their ordinary complexion. The pallor of anæmia, being of a waxen description, should not be confused with such. The dangers of non-treatment of an anæmic condition are, besides rendering the patient unfit for work, and leading to complications in the functions of the body,

that dilatation of the heart may be increased, and become a permanent condition.

The main points of treatment are:—Rest, to assist the recuperative powers; fresh air and sunshine in abundance, to recharge the blood with oxygen; iron tonics, so that the blood may be directly improved, and to stimulate the appetite; laxatives when necessary to remove the constipation and auto-intoxication caused by it; and lastly, and perhaps the most important factor in treatment, *i.e.*, suitable food. The diet should be rich in iron and mineral salts, which in anæmia are lacking in normal quantity and quality, and at the same time the diet should include those foods which are also laxative in character. Thus milk, eggs, raw beef juices, green vegetables, fresh fruits, oatmeal, wheaten bread, prunes, and such-like materials are especially suitable.

As is generally known, the blood supplies material for nutrition of the tissues of various kinds, also carrying oxygen in the red cells for oxidation purposes. The blood material requires constant replenishing of all its constituents to keep up the standard demanded by the bodily needs for the purpose, especially in the young, to help in building up and restoring the blood substance, which is being constantly deprived of its oxygen and nutriment by the actions of respiration and of the alimentary canal.

The results of unsuitable diet, causing the "poorness" of blood, are that organs of the body are ill-nourished, and do their work badly, leading to a train of symptoms of ill-health and disorders.

Warmth is important, especially in young children, when the circulation is poor, and woollen clothing should be worn next the skin.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss M. M. G. Bielby, Miss M. Pritty, Miss K. Kohler, Miss L. Oakes, Miss S. Simpson, Miss M. Mackenzie, Miss J. Dawes, Miss P. O'Brien.

Miss Simpson writes that the diet should be as generous as possible; milk, eggs, beef-tea, meat juice, or raw beef minced up finely will be largely depended on. The administration of bone marrow has been attended with some success. This is given to further the formation of the red corpuscles which are being destroyed.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What is leprosy? What progress has been made in its treatment?

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