

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

HOW WOULD YOU CARE FOR A CHILD SUFFERING FROM CHRONIC HEART DISEASE? IN WHAT WAYS COULD YOU MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR HIM?

We have pleasure in awarding the Prize this week to Miss Catharine Wright, Dryden Road, Enfield.

PRIZE PAPER.

When a child is suffering from the condition of chronic heart disease much of the buoyancy and happiness of childhood will be diminished owing to the physical conditions governing the activities of these little ones; any very strenuous effort or excitement causing undue fatigue, pain, or even collapse. But very much can be done by those in charge of these cases by a sympathetic understanding and management, so making the lives of these children happy, gay, and full of interest and usefulness.

When undertaking the care of these children it is wise to have the advice of a doctor, who will prescribe the amount of exercise and rest which will be most beneficial to each individual case.

Where rest in bed is essential, the room chosen should be bright, sunny, and well ventilated, at an even temperature of 60° F., preferably on the ground floor, looking on to a garden or open space. In this kind of room the noise of passing traffic would be lessened, and the garden prove a source of interest.

The bed should be firm, the covering light and warm, and, if an upright position is allowed, pillows and bed-rest should be firm and wide, and not hard. The hygiene treatment, a warm blanket bath daily, dried with warm towels; clothing light and warm, with special attention to back, and any prominences, which may easily chafe from pressure.

Temperature and pulse charted daily. Food, light and nourishing, varied with fruit and an abundance of pure milk. A daily action of the bowels encouraged at a regular time if possible.

Sleep, an hour or two during the afternoon, and nine or ten hours during the night. When free and more extensive movement is allowed, life in the open air will be most beneficial, always being careful to avoid chilliness and undue fatigue, a hammock making a charming and easily arranged resting place, and a base for useful and interesting observation. Later on, when further exercise is allowed, the day can be divided between work and play, always avoiding undue fatigue and exhaustion.

To keep up a sustained interest for the child one must get to understand his tastes and

ideas; this can only be discovered by unobtrusive observation, for many of these children are particularly shy and reserved in expressing themselves. Some children will become enthusiastic over the chrysalis stage of the butterfly and the silkworm, while others prefer modelling with plasticine or building castles with bricks.

There are some imaginative children who will build castles in the air by the hour together, and weave their ideas into quaint stories.

Needlework is a source of interest, and may prove a very useful pastime in the years to come.

Short and early tea parties or visits of other children should be encouraged, and a bond of sympathy and interest established between them. Kindergarten lessons are instructive and amusing, and train the mind of a child for further education and understanding.

These various hobbies and amusements can be made a source of real interest, and open out spheres of usefulness which may be cultivated and make useful and remunerative occupations in the years to come, when larger and heavier activities would be impossible.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss M. K. Steele, Miss May Freer, Miss Amy Green, Miss Dora Vine, and Mrs. Jamieson.

Miss M. K. Steele writes:—

“He must learn to love and trust the nurse in whose charge he is placed; he must obey, both when with her and when she is absent, her wishes for his good; he must forget self, must learn forbearance, and, above all, must be interested in everything which will neither excite nor distress him.

It is hard for an active child to suddenly become the audience instead of the actor, to be content to watch the many childish games and sports instead of taking a leading part, but very much may be done by an intelligent nurse in suggesting forms of varied amusement. Much time must be spent in rest. This special treatment can be greatly helped by reading aloud, learning poems by heart, cutting out figures in paper, telling stories which interest and soothe at the same time.

Food at special times can be made a form of ‘game’ if the child is allowed to guess or choose his own favourite meal, and explain to nurse what vegetable or animal went to form the whole, and what the habits or place of growth is of each article.

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