

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

HOW WOULD YOU FEED A NERVOUS PATIENT WHOSE DIET IS LEFT TO YOUR DISCRETION? GIVE A MODEL DIETARY FOR A DAY.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Ména M. G. Bielby, Cranford, Middlesex.

### PRIZE PAPER.

In the case of a nervous patient the predominance of the psychic factor in relation to feeding should never be forgotten for a moment. Any painful emotion, by affecting the nerves of the stomach, will interfere with the process of assimilation, and may cause acute indigestion. The appetite is capricious and the fancy often morbid; therefore, from first to last, feeding should be made a matter of pleasure to the patient, remembering the importance of anticipation based on pleasant retrospect, and the power to raise the spirits and stimulate the gastric juices held by cheerful colours and the daintiest of table appointments. Music or talk during meals, according to the taste of the patient, should be provided; but no serious discussion should be allowed, above all no physiological references.

At the outset I should ascertain from a reliable authority the foods for which the patient has a preference or a dislike. I should make friends with the cook, emphasising her collaboration. I should not give the patient the same dinner twice in a month, except by special request. Digestion being a process which extends hours after a meal, there is no period of the 24 hours when a patient's tranquillity may be disturbed with impunity, but special care is needed for half-an-hour before each meal and for one hour after it. A half-hour spent after breakfast in discussing the lighter side of the day's news yields better results than does "getting on with the work."

The diet should exclude all that would cause expenditure of blood and nervous energy in digesting superfluous food. Hence the finest wheatmeal should entirely replace starchy white flour. Reynolds's wheatmeal or Hovis flour and bread can easily be obtained. Wheatmeal is rich in iron and phosphorus; it contains abundant mineral salts in easily digestible form, proteids, fats and starches of the grain, as well as small quantities of ferment, which aids the digestion of fats. It prevents constipation.

Nervous patients require abundance of fat in easily digestible form. Therefore milk, cream, butter and olive oil should be freely given. Unless the milk supply be above sus-

picion, dried milk should be used. Glaxo, which contains 25 per cent. of butter-fat, is specially valuable, also Plasmon. Tea and coffee, if much desired, may be given in the form of China tea, and Allen & Hanburys' "Café Vierge," made with milk. A tumblerful of water, hot or cold, sipped slowly half an hour before meals, is advisable. Very chilly patients may have oatmeal porridge with milk for breakfast.

*Vegetables.*—Onions should be given frequently; also spinach, which is rich in iron. Carrots grated before cooking, lettuce daily, cauliflowers, green peas and tomatoes. All vegetables should be steamed, and potatoes boiled in their jackets.

*Fish.*—Sole, plaice, sprats, sardines, cod, halibut, and salmon. Steaming, or baking in a paper bag, is the best method of cooking.

*Meat.*—This is not essential, mutton, lamb, and chicken being the most suitable. Grated cheese is equally nutritious and digestible, also cream cheeses.

*Fruits.*—Dates, grapes, apples, and pineapple are the best.

*Drinks.*—Freshly made still lemonade, barley-water, koumiss, buttermilk.

No condiments should be used, with conservative modes of cooking, as they cause thirst just when fluid in the stomach is unadvisable. Exclude alcohol and vinegar. Supply abundant oxygen.

7 a.m.—Cup of hot water or freshly made tea.

8 a.m.—Poached egg, Hovis bread-and-butter and toast, honey, hot milk.

10.45 a.m.—Large cup of Allenburys' milk cocoa.

1.15 p.m.—Plaice, filleted, and garnished with finely chopped parsley; potatoes mashed with Plasmon milk, junket with clotted cream.

4.30 p.m.—Freshly made tea or Plasmon cocoa, wheatmeal bread-and-butter, shortbread.

7 p.m.—Tomato soup (2 ounces in cup), lamb cutlet, wheatmeal bread, spinach; baked apples and cream.

10 p.m.—Cup of hot Glaxo and Plasmon biscuits.

### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss P. Thomson, Miss M. James, Miss Anderson, Miss N. Baldwin.

### QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What do you understand by endocarditis? What are the early and later symptoms? What are the chief nursing points?

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