

## RHEUMATISM.

BY SIR BRUCE BRUCE-PORTER, K.B.E., C.M.G., M.D.

Rheumatism is a word which covers a multitude of pains. Someone once said until he had an attack of rheumatic fever and his body was outlined with a thread of pain he had no conception of the length of thread required to do this simple thing.

At one time every conceivable cause was given for rheumatism and they were in the main in the surroundings of the patient; to-day our knowledge is more accurate, and we know the cause lies in the individual rather than his environment, and that the microbe is the cause, or perhaps, to be most correct, the toxins produced by the microbe.

Sepsis is the *fons et origo* of all rheumatic affections. Rheumatism is like tobacco, the brands vary in strength but they are all unpleasant.

Prevention is the keynote of health, and to prevent rheumatism you must begin early.

I recently acted as Chairman to a committee giving a demonstration on the use of artificial sunlight in industry at a colliery. Three things stand out in my mind with regard to that area, first, the wrong dietary; second, the bad teeth; third, the number of the workers who suffered with rheumatic affections. You had here cause and effect. Neglect to eat rough food leads to decay of the teeth, and the germs from the teeth infect the digestive tract, in which from want of the natural stimulus of roughage there is stasis, and so absorption of toxins is bound to follow. Until every source of infection has been traced and removed, drugs are useless waste of money.

They have a very expressive term in American dental work; it is the "Silent Abscess." The New York Life Extension Company took a large group of people, and having submitted them to examination by dentists had those passed as free of infection submitted to X-rays. In a very large percentage, root abscesses were found. Now if this be the condition in a large group specially examined before the X-rays, what is the probable condition of those who have had but a cursory examination? In the ordinary examinations of the Institute, 59 per cent. of cases show root infection.

During my many years' practice, mostly amongst the section of the community who can afford extensive examinations, I have been struck with the enormous percentage of people who, under our present-day system of doctoring, are carrying *foci* of infection about with them and who can only be described as sub-normal in health, taking rheumatic aches and pains as some sort of a cross to be borne with Christian resignation. Many of these folk have even passed through the hands of specialists and said to be healthy, or at least free of obvious septic *foci*. In many of the folk further examinations by other specialists in nose and throat work and of X-rays of teeth, etc., have resulted in definite causes being traced and removed.

It is a mistake to think that removal of areas of infection will at once bring about a cure of rheumatism. It is unreasonable to think that damage caused by neglect of years can be cleared up in a few days. Nothing in my experience does more good for the chronic rheumatic patient than an abundance of plain drinking water to wash out the tissues, and a dietary known

as Lacto Vegetarian, consisting of eggs, butter, cheese, vegetables, salads and fruit, and wholemeal bread. Uncooked vegetables not as a rule used as salads make excellent substitutes when lettuces are scarce.

An old teacher of mine some forty years ago always said if he were condemned to practice medicine and limited to one drug, he would, without hesitation, choose Glauber Salts, and if it cost a guinea an ounce, instead of a few pence a pound, it would be more appreciated. Certain it is that a small dose of sulphate of soda every morning would give greater benefit than many complicated prescriptions. He knew in those days the importance of thoroughly cleaning out the main street of the body.

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

DESCRIBE THE SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES OF ACUTE NEPHRITIS IN AN ADULT. HOW WOULD YOU NURSE SUCH A CASE?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this month to Miss Amy Phipps, F.B.C.N., Longmarton, Ashford.

### PRIZE PAPER.

The features of acute nephritis vary largely according to the age, habits, general health and constitution of the individual patient.

### CAUSES.

Acute nephritis is caused by exposure to cold and damp, and it also frequently occurs as a complication of scarlet fever and influenza, and occasionally as a complication of diphtheria, erysipelas, and other specific and tropical fevers and constitutional diseases. It also sometimes follows upon functional albuminuria, and may occur as the result of acute poisoning, especially in connection with phosphorus and mercurial poisoning.

A severe type of nephritis sometimes occurs during pregnancy, due to the circulation of certain waste products of metabolism being formed to greater excess at this time, and to such an extent that the kidneys are unable to deal with them adequately.

Rheumatic tendencies and a previous attack of nephritis act as predisposing causes in many cases.

### SYMPTOMS.

One of the main features of the disease is the condition of the urine, which is largely diminished in quantity, high coloured and smoky in appearance, and upon chemical examination is found to contain much albumen and sometimes blood: upon microscopic examination, blood corpuscles and tube casts may be found. This is due to changes in the kidney, when, as a result of inflammation, the tubules which assist in the secretion of urine become swollen and their interior blocked with the debris resulting from the shedding of their lining membrane. All or only a few of the tubules may be involved. If the process goes on, the kidneys generally become congested and engorged with blood; later there is wasting of the secreting elements, and the organ is quite inefficient as an excretory organ.

Other symptoms include: marked dropsy, varying from a puffiness of the eyelids, face and ankles in the morning, to an accumulation of fluid, distending the whole body; loss of appetite, severe headache and backache, vomiting, dizziness, some rise of temperature, optic disturbance and constipation.

When uræmia is threatened or present, there may be

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