CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE.

By B. N. Ghosh, F.R.F.P.S. (Glasg.) and J. L. Das, L.M. & S. (Cal. Uni.)

EXCESS OF FOOD.

FOOD when taken in excess leads to certain gastro-intestinal troubles. Fermentative and putrefactive processes are set up with the generation of offensive gases leading to dyspeptic troubles. These may be attended with either constipation or diarrhœa. Some of the products of putrefaction are absorbed into the system and give rise to symptoms of auto-intoxication, viz., headache, fever, a bitter taste in the mouth, foetied breath and torpor. If fat or carbohydrate be in excess in the food, they seem to set up acid dyspepsia with accumulation of much flatus. Fat is also deposited in the tissues and persons suffer from obesity, not uncommon amongst the better class Indians. Besides giving rise to the above symptoms, excess of food puts an extra strain on the digestive system with the result that secretion and peristalsis are both considerably diminished. Excess of animal proteins causes an undue tax on the excretory organs and may increase a pre-existing tendency, or develop one, if it does not already exist, to gouty or other allied diseases.

DEFICIENCY OF FOOD.

Deficiency in all the proximate principles of diet involves oss of weight, debility, poverty of blood and prostiation. Complete deprivation leads to rapid wasting, dryness of mucous membrane, impaired action of the heart and respiratory system, low fever, restlessness, delirium, coma, and finally death. Young subjects bear starvation badly and die very soon. Absence of fat leads to a state of malnutrition. The lack of nitrogenous elements predisposes persons, especially rice feeders, to phthisis, pneumonia, etc. Continued starvation produces the most disastrous effects on the human constitution, and Cunningham has shown that the digestive functions become so altered and degenerated from disuse that when at last a sufficiency of nutriment is given the wasted organs cannot utilise it and the sufferer dies from inanition.

The ill-fed poor classes of Bengal often suffer from a cachectic condition characterised by chronic diarrhœa often alternating with dysentery. This was described by Chevers as (Morbus Bengalensis). They die in a state of starvation, however well they may be fed afterwards. The inability of the system to receive nourishment is due to slow failure of the nutritive faculty after long feeding upon poor, bad, and indigestible food.