

Shortage of Blood

By David L, Chan

It was a warm and sunny weekend. People were off their usual duties and spending the lovely day in the most enjoyable way they could possibly think of. Lawns in the parks were occupied by families sitting placidly basking in the winter sunshine under the dear blue sky. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon Mrs. Lee was putting the last few pieces of sandwiches into the lunch box. John and Nancy were both ready. Their father could be returning at any minute to bring the family of four to a favourite country spot they frequently visit on sunny weekends like this.

The phone rang. Mrs. Lee picked up the receiver.

"Hellow, is it the Lee's?"

The voice was unfamiliar. She wondered who it could be.

"That's right. Mrs. Lee speaking."

"This is the nurse in charge of casualty admission. Your husband was injured in a traffic accident and admitted to our hospital half an hour ago.

Mrs. Lee felt the heart beating within her.

"How is he now ...?"

"We are doing our best for him. There seems to be quite a bit of internal bleeding. Could you come along at once?"

"I'll be right there"

In the operation theatre a team of doctors were all alert and busy. They knew from examination of the patient that an operation was required. They also knew from their experience that the patient will have a fair chance of survival if he could stand the surgery. As the chief surgeon was making his final check on the instruments, news arrived from the blood bank that the particular group of blood Mr. Lee required was lacking. A neighbouring hospital was ranged up, and then another. But none had any store. Then the hospital tried to track down any people whom they knew to be of the particular blood group. As the minutes dragged on, Mrs. Lee, with her two children as worried as their mother, waited at the hospital corridor?

Happening like that which occurred to the Lee family is not a rare finding. In fact the shortage of blood is a common difficulty experienced by practically all big hospitals and in many countries over the world. Over the past few decades, developments are such that a lot more of blood is required in our hospitals today than twenty or thirty years ago. Speedy travel facilities have increased the number of serious traffic accidents. The evolution of industrial process has created new danger for workmen

and paroxically, what is worst of all, the advance of medical science has made the situation more serious than ever before. Many patients not enable to treatment some years ago can now be saved through advances in surgical and other techniques. Disease conditions seemed uncurable by standards twenty years ago are actively combated by doctors who have now mastered new knowledge and skill. Invention of the heart-lung machine succeeded in creating a cardio-pulmonary bypass in the body circulation and enabled doctors to perform operations such as open heart surgery for the correction of defects in the septa and valves of the heart. Progress in transplant surgery has brought new hope for many patients. With all these developments, there is a real great demand in our hospital today, of highly trained medical personnel, of various types of complicated medical equipment and above all, an unprecedented demand for that precious life-saving raw material required in the management of many patients. — human blood.

This acute shortage of blood affects a great number of people. Our doctors, concerned with saving lives have spent a lot of effort to deal with the situation. They devise new methods for the shortage of blood. Some experistitutes while others study fragment on artificial blood subtionation techniques so that whole blood is separated into its various components, and only the specific component required by a patient is given to him so that a given amount of blood can be given simultaneously and effectively to patients requiring different factors. Unfortunately all these measures are inadequate as yet to relieve the condition of blood shortage. Further research are still required to find a scientific breakthrough.

However, the difficulty is not insuperable. More and more people today are beginning to realise the social obligation towards their fellow men as a contributory factor towards a better community. Some of these obligations as for example tax-paying, may be enforced under law, but others are entirely voluntary. It is the recognition and practice of a voluntary social obligation which is most praise-worthy and which serves as a concrete illustration of the bright and hopeful side of man and mankind today. At a time when our society is faced with this crisis of blood shortage, at a time when the lives of thousands and the happiness of many more depend on the overcoming of the crisis, blood donation is certainly the most honoured of such obligations.

—The End—