

1905.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE TEETH OF OUR CHILDREN

(A PLEA FOR THEIR BETTER CARE AND PRESERVATION).

Laid on the Table of the House by Leave.

A PAPER read before the Dental Conference, at Wellington, on Wednesday, the 7th June, 1905. By
F. W. THOMPSON, President of the Christchurch Odontological Society.

PREFACE.

WHEN I was invited to read a paper on the teeth of children before the first meeting of the Dental Conference I was peculiarly gratified at the subject selected for me. It is a subject the surpassing importance of which, in its relation to the public health, cannot be exaggerated. The teeth of, I venture to say, 98 per cent. of our children do not receive the care they deserve. The result is that already early in life, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the apparatus provided by nature for the proper performance of one of the most, if not the most, important of all physiological functions is sadly impaired. The processes of nature are evolutionary, not revolutionary, in character, and the evil effects of neglect in any given direction may not be visible in a day; nevertheless, I have no hesitation in asserting that defective teeth and an unclean condition of the mouth, which is the common thing, instead of the rare exception, are amongst the most potent of the causes which are making for that physical and moral degeneration of the race, signs of which are even now engaging the attention of the more thoughtful among us. To my mind, let me add by way of warning, it is evidence of shallow and immature thought to suppose that evolution necessarily spells progress and improvement. I can conceive circumstances under which it may mean ruin. History furnishes us with more than one instance of progressive degeneration. I do not suppose that any measures man can devise will solve the problem of eternal life for the body politic, any more than it is possible to make a mortal immortal. But, just as Tennyson was able to exclaim,

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

so, I think, is it possible to lengthen, as we go on, the span of our historic cycles. By adopting precautions where precautions are needed, by improving where improvement is required, by holding neglect—the arch-enemy of mankind—at arm's length, we can, I doubt not, retard degeneration and fulfil the “increasing purpose” of which Tennyson speaks.

The facts and opinions of leading authorities, which I have been able to collect and quote in the following paper, will, I hope, convince the most sceptical that one of the most important of the ways in which we can preserve the national health and vigour, in body and in mind, is by proper attention to the teeth of our children. I hope, too, that I shall have succeeded in convincing them that Governmental interference in the shape of legislation in the direction indicated in the paper is urgently necessary to check the present deplorable conditions. I have not overloaded my paper with statistics. I might, indeed, have multiplied these indefinitely. I think, however, that a few judiciously selected from unimpeachable sources are capable of affording an accurate idea of the real situation, quite as much as wearisome pages and columns of figures, which are only intelligible to an expert statistician.

In conclusion, I would add that the care of the teeth of children is a subject to which I have given long and earnest thought and attention, and one on which I feel very deeply. If this paper succeeds in bringing home to the public mind, in ever so little a degree, the vital importance and solemnity of the question, I shall have been more than repaid for the time and trouble its preparation has cost me.

OF THE CONDITION OF THE TEETH OF SCHOOL-CHILDREN, AND THE REMEDY FOR THE PRESENT STATE OF THINGS.

THE SUBJECT STATED.

THE subject of this address, gentlemen, is of the state of the teeth of school-children, and of the remedial measures necessary to deal successfully with actual conditions of a most deplorable character.

IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION.

No question, I take it, deserves more the earnest attention, not only of the members of this association but of the general public. It is as important a question as any affecting the public health. So little is this recognised at present, however, either by the Government or the general public, that whilst the most elaborate regulations for the preservation of the public health are enforced in other respects, in this one—a proper regard for which is indisputably a basic condition of really good health—no legislation or attempt at legislation has ever been made.

So important and representative a body as the Fourth International Dental Congress would not have lent its authority to a campaign in this behalf were the matter not one deserving immediate action. Let me, therefore, read to you the terms of a resolution adopted unanimously by that assembly. It is as follows: "Resolved, That public dental services should be organized in hospitals, schools, factories, &c., and wherever the poor are medically treated, that they may receive not only urgent medical and surgical attention (whether as to dressings, consultation, temporary fillings, or extractions), but that, so far as possible, thorough treatment be given to restore the dental organs by means of the resources which modern dentistry affords, and such as is employed in the private practice of dentistry, and as is the case in the dispensary practice of general medicine and surgery; that is to say, not emergency treatment only, but thorough dentistry is demanded for the poorer classes."

Sound teeth must be considered as the basis of good health. No precise statistics, unfortunately, are available to show the extent to which illness generally is ultimately traceable to a bad state of the teeth. It is, however, I think, unquestionable that poor health is more often than not solely due to a defective condition of the teeth. For, apart altogether from the question of good looks and the ability to speak distinctly, both of which depend to no small extent upon the possession of good teeth, it is quite obvious that without the latter the proper mastication and insalivation of food is impossible. This gives rise to various constitutional disturbances—especially abdominal affections—which must in time have a deleterious effect upon the nervous system. One hears a good deal of the relation of diet to physical health, and I do not for a moment suggest that the question of suitable food is not one of first-rate importance. Still, gentlemen, there appears to me to be some danger here, if I may be pardoned the use of the expression, of "putting the cart before the horse." The kind of food an individual eats can only be of minor importance when he is no longer in a position to masticate it properly.

ULTIMATE RESULTS.

In view, then, of the considerations I have briefly enumerated, I think there will be no hesitation in accepting the very grave conclusion that anything like a frequent occurrence of defective teeth must eventually and fatally issue in the physical and moral degeneration. This being so, care of the health of the mouth and the preservation (I use the word advisedly) of the apparatus which nature has provided for the proper mastication of food is a matter of national importance, and, as such, worthy of State supervision.

STATE ACTION JUSTIFIED.

In no direction is State interference more justified and more praiseworthy than in the measures it devises in the interests of public health, and those interests can only be served properly by insuring, as far as it is possible to do so, the preservation of the teeth of the community.

BAD TEETH AMONGST CHILDREN.

To the members of our profession it is a well-known fact that the overwhelming proportion of defective dentition dates from childhood. The ignorance of parents regarding the physiological functions of the teeth, their apathy in impressing upon children the importance of giving proper attention to them, and their complete indifference regarding the state of their children's mouths until toothache at last indicates the fatal inroads of decay are proverbial. Children are for the most part taught to wash their hands and bathe their bodies. How many are warned of the surpassing importance of attending to the mouth, "the very vestibule of life," as one writer eloquently describes it! It is this sad neglect which is at the bottom of that unhappy state of things to which I now propose to refer in some detail.

SOME REASONS.

That bad teeth are extremely common amongst children is admitted by all competent observers. We in New Zealand should know it well enough. Whether it be that youngsters eat too much meat, itself very bad for the teeth; whether it is attributable to the water; whether parental neglect be answerable, I will not say ignorance, because the standard of education here is exceptionally high; whether it be due to the worthless tooth-brushes, the bad powders and washes one so often comes across; in a word, whatever the cause or causes, one thing is certain, that the teeth of our children are anything rather than what they should be. Decayed and infectious-coated teeth, offensive breath, a conspicuous display of discoloured fillings, and that exceedingly common and hideous monstrosity, when conspicuous—the gold crown—are everywhere to be seen.

I was invited recently to examine the teeth of the children in a Christchurch primary school, so that I am in a position to speak on this subject from first-hand knowledge. The results of my examina-

tion were really alarming. I examined 106 children—all, of course, with many of their so-called permanent teeth. There were 34 girls between the ages of nine and twelve, 41 girls between the ages of thirteen and fourteen, and 31 boys between ten and eleven years of age. Of all these, only one child, a boy, had all the teeth sound, and he was a native of Australia. Not one New-Zealand-born child had sound permanent teeth. Moreover, the boy with the sound teeth was a recent arrival in the colony. Of the 105 others, about four had their teeth stopped, and to that extent their mouths could be said to be in good order. By immediate attention the teeth of about 40 per cent. of the children could be easily saved; the rest were too far gone to admit of really satisfactory treatment of a conservative character. One girl of eleven had a few artificial teeth. Many of the six-year-old molars had been extracted, and a larger proportion had decayed and broken away, so that only the stumps were left. The gums were naturally in a most unhealthy condition, and the children would, of course, find it impossible to masticate their food properly. They are now laying the foundations of what in after-life will, alas! only too certainly determine physical ill health—ay, and moral ill health also. Let me add that the number of scholars attending Government schools is to-day upwards of 130,000.

To the average man or woman, boy or girl, of to-day it cannot, unfortunately, be said, in the beautiful words of Solomon, addressed to the daughter of Zion, "Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep, even shorn, which go up from the washing, whereof everyone bearest twins, and there is not one barren among them."

Whether the mother lacks the nutrition to form the calcium salts necessary to the enamel substance in the child *in utero*, for caps of enamel and dentine of the twenty temporary and four permanent first molars are formed before birth. The first month after birth the eight permanent incisors and four canines are also formed, and at the third and twelfth years respectively calcification has commenced on the second molars and wisdom teeth. The entire crown of each tooth is represented in soft tissue before deposition of earthy salts commences. Whether, after birth, the child is usually fed by artificial means instead of the "source" provided by nature; and, even then, I doubt not that many teeth, if able to, would exclaim in the words of Goldsmith—

Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so.

CARIES OF TEETH A NORMAL CONDITION WITH CHILDREN.

In a paper on "The Care of the Teeth during School Life," read before the Congress on School Hygiene at Nürnberg last year, the author (an M.R.C.S. and an L.D.S.) made the following remark: "It may be said, I think, that decay of teeth is the most common departure from the normal which occurs amongst children; indeed, the figures which have been carefully compiled lead one to say that carious teeth have become the normal thing to be noted in young mouths."

STATISTICS.

What are these figures? Let us pause to consider them for a bit. Gathered as they have been in all parts of the world, they are distinctly interesting, and fully bear out the contention of the writer from whom I have just quoted.

AN ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL.

Of some twelve hundred boys, of an average of thirteen years and ten months, who, in a period of nine years, passed through one of the English public schools, only three in every hundred were found to possess sound teeth. Of the remainder, 18 per cent. were artificially sound, in the sense that they had been treated, and the balance of 79 per cent. required treatment. Seventy-nine out of every hundred of those boys required treatment and had not received it. The authority from whom I take these startling figures states that the average number of teeth per boy requiring attention was 3·8, a mean between ratios of 2·19 at thirteen years and 6·16 at seventeen years. And, mind you, these boys were boys of good social position. These figures appear to me to be eloquent with meaning.

THE POOR CLASSES IN ENGLAND.

What is the position in this respect, you may ask, of the poorer classes in England? Figures collected in poor-law schools, workhouses, and reformatories by the British Dental Association shall help us to form an opinion. But it may be well to preface them with an observation of great truth contained in an article on this question by Mr. Sidney Spokes, M.R.C.S., L.D.S., who says that "in England the children of the poorest are in many ways better off than those next above them in the social scale. The Poor-law Guardians, who stand *in loco parentis*, appear on the whole to recognise their responsibilities to the children." Well, of 10,500 English and Scotch children of both sexes, and of an average age of twelve years, 14 per cent. only were sound. The remainder had 37,000 unsound teeth among them, of which 18,000 were temporary and 19,000 were permanent teeth.

THE POSITION ABROAD.

The position abroad is just as bad as it is at Home. Let us take the case of Germany. Dr. Jessen, of Strasburg, assures us that out of 4,000 children—half boys and half girls—who were examined in one year in that city, only 104 had a perfect set of teeth. The proportion of defective dentition was 97·5 per cent. of the total number, and yet only 2·62 per cent. had received treatment, apart, says Dr. Jessen, "from the children who had on occasion painful or loose teeth extracted." The same results, approximately, were found in many other German cities, and the percentage of bad teeth per mouth varied between 22 per cent. and 33 per cent.

In Russia, again, much the same conditions prevail. Monsieur Gabronsky, the delegate representing the Russian Government at the International Congress on School Hygiene last year, assured the Congress that statistics obtained in many cities all over Europe revealed the fact that 95 per cent. of all school-children possessed carious teeth. Statistics based on the examination of a very large number of girls in various Russian schools—and girls are somewhat worse than boys as regards the condition of their teeth—show that from 92 to 95 per cent. had imperfect teeth.

In America 93 per cent. of children have their teeth affected. In Italy the percentage is 92, and in Switzerland it varied from 90 to 100 per cent. In Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, and other States the figures are very similar.

THE CASES OF FILIPINOS AND CHINESE.

It is interesting to observe that defective dentition is by no means confined to European children. Dr. Louis Ottogy, of Manila, in a paper on "International Examination and Tabulation of the Condition of the Teeth of Public-school Children," read before the Fourth International Dental Congress, gave the result of what is believed to be the first examination of the teeth of other than Caucasian children. Five hundred Filipino and Chinese pupils, half boys and half girls, were examined by Dr. Ottogy in the public schools of Manila. "The average of carious teeth in males," he says "was 24.50 per cent., in females 31.40 per cent., in both sexes 27.95 per cent. . . . None of the boys had received any dental attention, and only one girl. . . . The average number of teeth present in each child was 24.9; while in white, American and European, children the average is somewhat under 23. . . . Only thirteen of the 250 boys had every tooth sound; of the 250 girls only eleven had every tooth sound, or one-half of 1 per cent."

In another examination of fifty boys, all of pure Chinese parentage, Dr. Ottogy found 78 per cent. of sound and 22 per cent. of carious teeth, which is somewhat better than the European average.

CONCLUSIONS SUGGESTED BY THE FIGURES QUOTED.

I think I have now made it clear to you that dental trouble is the most common of all diseases, and if, as we learned from the quotation with which I prefaced these statistics, "carious teeth have become the normal thing to be noted in young mouths," so now we can have no difficulty in realising with Dr. Jessen, of Strasburg, that "to-day caries of the teeth has become a general disease, since from 78 per cent. to 99 per cent. of the human race have bad teeth. Among school children scarcely 2 per cent. possess a healthy set of teeth."

SOME CAUSES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL.

To what now, I would ask you, are we to attribute this sorry state of things? I have already, in an earlier part of my address, made passing reference to some of the causes, but I think we may well examine two of them in greater detail, seeing that a consideration of these will suggest the remedy which it is my purpose to advocate.

The first and most important is undoubtedly neglect to attend to the teeth at the proper time. It would be superfluous for me to tell you how attention to the teeth is almost invariably postponed until toothache insistentlly claims attention. The public do not seem to recognise that preventive and preservative treatment should be the chief work of a dental surgeon. With their conception of a dentist, I am quite sure that ninety-nine persons out of a hundred associate solely the idea of wrenching out teeth.

PARENTAL NEGLECT.

"Parents," writes Mr. J. Isherwood Shirrock, L.D.S., England, "do not in these modern times attend to the requirements in contradistinction to the wants of their children as they did heretofore."

A clear recognition is needed of the fact that a knowledge of the teeth and their care and preservation is an essential factor in a child's education. If the child could be educated from the earliest period when it is able to grasp facts and the necessity for thorough care of its teeth, the health, wealth, and prosperity of schools would be established." No doubt a certain proportion of bad teeth are due to heredity, to constitutional illness, and the like, but certainly the vast majority of cases can be traced to neglect, want of prophylactic treatment, and, as Monsieur Gabronsky points out, to "the false conviction of the public that stopping for the milk teeth is unnecessary, because these must fall out and their places are immediately taken by healthy teeth." It is only too true that parents do habitually take notice of the condition of the teeth of their children only when decay has done its work. There may be, and undoubtedly there are, a variety of predisposing causes, but, as compared with parental neglect, all others fade into insignificance.

IGNORANCE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF HYGIENE.

I now come to the second of the causes to which I referred above, namely, general ignorance on the part of the public of the principles of dental hygiene. There can be no question that parents and children alike are shockingly ignorant of the evils attendant upon the neglect of their teeth, and some effort to enlighten them by making them acquainted with the facts is imperative. "The instruction of parents is an urgent matter, both with regard to proper feeding and the necessity for mouth-cleaning. At present, even when their children's urgent condition is pointed out, they frequently neglect the warning. "At all events," continues Mr. Sidney Spokes, from whom I am now quoting, "if the parents are to remain ignorant, let the children receive at school some instruction as to the importance of personal hygiene and the careful treatment of their teeth." When we realise the enormous number of school

children growing up to constitute the men and women of to-morrow, when we remember that they will be the progenitors of yet another generation of the human race, we cannot but admit the supreme importance of doing everything in our power to make them sound and healthy, and to instil in their minds those momentous principles of hygiene, observation of which can alone insure that our descendants shall not cast upon us the terrible reproach that in the selfishness of our own existence we gave no thought to those who were to follow us.

SOME CONSEQUENCES FURTHER DISCOVERED.

I have now described to you the details of what is, I think, a universal and alarming state of things. I have discussed at some length the causes thereof, and I have indicated some of the consequences. Perhaps a few further remarks in regard to the latter may not be superfluous. Bad teeth in childhood must, of course, determine defective dentition in after years. The state of the teeth in the army in various countries indubitably demonstrates this. In his speech in the House of Commons, on the introduction of the Army Estimates in 1899, the Secretary of State for War said,—

ARMY STATISTICS.

“He was sorry to say that 35 per cent. of those who offered themselves were rejected on medical grounds. A good many of the rejections were due to bad teeth, and a large number to the lack of general development. It occurred to him that in elementary schools supported by public funds, it might not be impossible to teach the children to take elementary precautions for the preservation of their teeth.”

Dr. Jessen, whom I have already quoted to you this evening, supplies some interesting statistics. According to him, Cunningham found in the English army 96 per cent. of men with bad teeth, the average number of carious teeth per head being 7.5. In the German army the percentage of men affected seems to vary from 79 per cent. to 95 per cent., and the number of bad teeth from 6.9 to 9.60.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL.

Another consequence of the neglect of the teeth of school-children is the serious economic loss in school time owing to absence on account of toothache. In elementary schools at Home, 17 per cent. of scholars are daily absent. We may rest assured that a very considerable portion of this absence is directly due to teeth trouble or to illness attributable to neglect of the teeth, and that it would be obviated were the teeth properly looked after. The extent of the loss may best be realised by a computation made by Dr. H. L. Ambler, of Cleveland, Ohio, and referred to by him in a paper read before the Fourth International Dental Congress on “The Care of the Teeth of the Poor.” Taking the number of children of school age (five years to twenty years) in the United States at 15,000,000 on the moderate assumption that each child loses one hour in the school year, “at the end of the year there will have been lost,” says Dr. Ambler, “more than 14,000 school years. Is it not reasonable to presume that 3 or 4 per cent. of this time has been lost on account of dental lesions?” No comment seems to me to be required.

EFFECT ON HEALTH.

I have already spoken of the effect upon health, but perhaps it may be well to emphasize this aspect of the question. The age of change of teeth is a very critical time in child-life. “It is the time,” says one authority, “when the child enters the school, and great claims are made upon his body and mind. Only a strong, healthy body is equal to the test, for the healthy mind can only be found together with the former. The mouth especially must be healthy, because that is the entrance to the body.” Healthy teeth are again the first condition of a healthy mouth. Chronic diseases of the stomach and intestines are largely caused by badly masticated food, and Berthou asserts that “many of the illnesses of school-children, such as headache, faintness, loss of appetite, poorness and want of blood, can be traced principally to diseased teeth.” Microbes rapidly breed in an unclean mouth, and, together with other rotten products, are carried by the breath and by the saliva into the lungs and the stomach, and thence by way of the lymphatic glands into the body. The report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in Scotland, set up last year, says that, if not an indication of degeneration, the present condition of things regarding the teeth of the people contributes to the causes producing degeneration by the poison which dental caries introduces into the system and the gastric disorders that arise therefrom.

Before I leave this part of my subject, I should like to quote a passage to you from an article entitled “Bad Teeth and Disease,” which appeared in the *Press* of the 18th January last. In that article, Dr. Louis Henry, assistant physician at the Prince Alfred Hospital, pointed out that the physical development of the race is largely influenced by the condition of the teeth. “The mouth,” says Dr. Henry, “forms a most prolific culture-bed for all kinds of bacteria, and a person suffering from dental decay is constantly swallowing injurious germs of various kinds.” Dr. Henry made observations on six hundred patients in twelve months, the cases comprising various forms of gastric and intestinal disturbances, rheumatism, anæmia, bronchial and pulmonary affections, enlarged glands, adenoids, disturbances of eye and ear, throat-inflammations and neurosis. He found that over 80 per cent. of these were associated with dental decay in advanced stages. Two typical cases are those of a boy and a business man, both of whom had bad teeth. The boy came to the hospital on crutches, but three weeks after his teeth were removed he walked home without crutches. The business man was in a state of rapid decline, but after his teeth had been attended to he became completely convalescent and resumed work. Dr. Henry believes that most infants are born healthy, and that as a rule the decay of teeth and ill health are due to improper feeding. The belief in lime-water as a bone-former is a popular error, because the lime required in food does not come from the water, but from the solid particles of the food

consumed, and the lime in water has no influence on the process of animal nutrition. The use of white bread should be discouraged, especially in the case of children, and a bread made of flour containing all its natural ingredients substituted. Dr. Henry pleads for the periodical inspection of the teeth of State-school children.

There is probably no reason to suppose that the teeth of colonial children are in a better state than those of the children of Germany, England, and America, and dental statistics gathered in these last three countries show an alarming state of affairs. Over 40 per cent. of the teeth examined in children attending school in Germany were bad. In England, 75 per cent. of the children examined had bad teeth. In the United States, 95 per cent. of the children of the poorer classes had carious teeth, and in the hospitals of New York it is stated that the diseases of the digestive organs which come from decayed teeth far outnumber those from all other causes put together.

THE REMEDIES DISCUSSED.

What remedies, then, for this curse of civilisation ought we, as an association, to advocate unceasingly? I think there are two. In the first place, instruction to parents and children in the principles of hygiene and the importance of devoting the utmost care to the preservation of the teeth is very desirable.

TEACHING OF HYGIENE.

Let me read to you the proposals of the Physical Deterioration Committee in regard to this. You will with me certainly have no difficulty in indorsing them. They are as follows:—

“1. That the teaching of the elements of hygiene should be made compulsory in schools, and that in this teaching the care of the teeth should receive special attention.

“2. That the daily cleansing of the teeth should be enforced by parents and teachers.”

Gentlemen, the third proposal which I am about to read to you enunciates the second and the most important of the remedies I have to recommend. It is as follows:—

SYSTEMATIC EXAMINATION OF THE TEETH OF SCHOOL-CHILDREN.

“3. That the systematic examination of the teeth of children by competent dentists, employed by school authorities, should be practised where possible to prevent caries extending, to stop carious teeth, and to remedy defects of the teeth.”

Yet, gentlemen, however much you may instil the principles of hygiene into the minds of the young, you will never by that measure alone cope successfully with this dreadful evil. Again, speaking with Dr. Jessen, I say that the instruction of children in the school and the inspection and treatment of their teeth in dental surgeries form the only weapons by which this world-wide evil can be combated. “If the mouths of children in public schools could be examined by competent dentists, carious or diseased teeth filled or extracted, and instructions given and enforced with regard to the intelligent use of brushes and antiseptics, the death-rate of this country would be very materially lessened,” said an American doctor recently, “the percentage of illness must be reduced, and a strong and more vigorous race result.” Every authority I have been able to examine says the same thing. Every one of them advocates frequent and compulsory examination of the mouths of children. Every one of them says that such a measure, and such a measure alone, is calculated to improve the teeth of the community, because by that means alone can you stop in time the process of decay in the mouths of the rising generation. In fine, by that means alone can you insure the physical and moral health of your descendants, and, therefore, the survival of the human race in a noble instead of in a degraded position in nature.

What is required seems to me to have been well summarised by Mr. Sidney Spokes, as follows:—

“1. That children should receive instruction as to the importance of sound teeth and the necessity of taking care of them.

“2. That in all poor-law schools dental treatment should be compulsory.

“3. That in Board schools it should be at first optional, and later on obligatory.

“4. That in public and private boarding-schools there should be compulsory inspection on arrival, with reports to parents when necessary.

“5. That for all scholars the use of the tooth-brush at the least after the last meal of the day should be enforced.”

The classification of schools in this enumeration is, of course, the English one, but, *mutatis mutandis*, the suggestions are applicable to our own education system. To these suggestions I will add one other. In every hospital a thorough inspection of the teeth of inmates should be made, inasmuch as not infrequently dental lesions will be found to be at the bottom of their trouble.

Finally, I have no hesitation in saying that when the public has learned to pay proper attention to the teeth, one of the greatest sanitary reforms the world has ever witnessed will have been accomplished. Contagion and disease resulting from an insanitary and infectious condition of the mouth, are a thousand times more subtle and dangerous than when arising from other causes, because infection of the mouth is to be found wherever humanity dwells. When amongst the other measures possessed by the community for the promotion of its welfare, one shall take its place for the compulsory dental supervision of children, I venture to predict that the public health will be much improved and the happiness of the people greatly increased.

MOTION MADE.

Gentlemen, there remains but little for me to add. From what I have said, and after hearing the authorities I have quoted, I think you will agree with me that it is urgently necessary that immediate steps should be taken either by the State or by the Education Boards of the colony, acting under the instructions of the State, for the examination and treatment of school-children. I say, with a European

writer on the subject, " Give me the children of this country, and I will annihilate the dental extracting-parlour, rob quackery of its victims, win the eternal gratitude of the dental faculty, and place the dental profession on the highest pinnacle of public favour." The only question is, how is it going to be done? We cannot go to the Government, saying to them, " See to it that the teeth of our school-children are examined quarterly, and treated whenever treatment is necessary, or we will turn you out of office." But at least this association can bring the force of argument to bear on the Ministry, and I believe when they understand the state of things which exists in our public schools, and the ruin which is being wrought through the absence of proper supervision and inspection, the Government will be willing to take the requisite steps to bring about a reform. It is not for us to suggest, I take it, whether the Government should hand this matter over to the Education Boards to attend to, or deal with it directly themselves by appointing their own dentists. Our duty ends when we have pointed out what is required, and have urged that the necessary steps should be taken.

I have now much pleasure in moving, That a deputation from this association wait on the Minister of Education with the object of urging him to assist us by providing means for the inspection of the teeth of the children of the State schools.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,450 copies), £2 9s.

Price, 6d.]

By Authority: JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1905.

