

MEDICAL MATTERS.

CHILDREN AND DENTAL DISEASES.

Two interesting papers on the above important subject were delivered at the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association at Liverpool, in the Section of State Medicine—one by Dr. R. J. Erskine Young, Dental Officer to the Liverpool Education Committee; the other by Dr. J. Sim Wallace, Lecturer on Dental Surgery and Pathology at the London Hospital. The papers are printed in full in the *British Medical Journal*.

Dr. Erskine Young writes:—"The deplorable dental condition of the poorer classes of society is already too well known to the dental profession, but it was only as recently as 1907 that certain municipal authorities recognized this. After due consideration, the dental clinic at Cambridge was begun in July of that year, and in the same month of 1907 the Liverpool Education Committee felt justified in starting a dental clinic, with a view to do something to combat the ravages of dental caries among the children of the day industrial schools of Liverpool and that at Hightown (at that time called the truant schools). Applications were duly invited, and the writer of this article was appointed "for three years as an experiment." At the end of that period—namely, October, 1910—my appointment was made permanent, as the clinic was believed to have done sufficient good to justify the step.

"The first step taken was to examine the teeth of all the children in all the six schools, and this examination has been repeated four times yearly since that time. On visiting each school the bookkeeper makes a note of each child's requirements, as dictated by me after examination of the mouth. The work entailed by such examination is very great, and we have never attempted elaborate charting. Opposite the name of each child are two columns, the first for fillings required and the second for extractions. I rapidly review the mouth, and count the number of cavities which can be inexpensively and beneficially filled, and that number is duly noted. I further take into account the number of teeth which are either unsavable or which would require elaborate treatment, and that number is duly noted under extractions. Between forty and sixty children are examined in a morning, and this is continued thrice weekly for a fortnight. I can in this period examine all the children (about 1,000) attending all the day industrial schools. On the com-

pletion of my survey the children are sent to me alphabetically, except those in pain, who are, as far as possible, sent at once.

"And now let me refer to actual treatment. I devote three half-days of each week to the work, and, as my efforts are unremitting, the time given has proved ample. Owing to the necessity for economy, only the simplest treatment has been adopted, and it largely consists of "cement" and "amalgam" fillings, and, where necessary, extractions.

CHILDREN AND PAIN.

"The avoidance of pain in dental operating is, of course, an exceedingly important matter. Where I must extract, it is done for the most part painlessly, by means of judicious employment of a local anæsthetic.

"The giving of pain would mean not only that the children would be unnecessarily frightened, but the question of parental objection would arise. This brings me to speak of

THE CLINIC FROM THE CHILDREN'S STANDPOINT.

"I fear it must be admitted that, at least at first, the children were very sorry for themselves, and in some cases the child required a great deal of coaxing—much time being lost thereby. But it would appear as though I have gained the young people's confidence in a measure, for I now have very little trouble, and practically never resistance on the part of the child. For the most part the children and I are very good friends, and I believe I can attribute this to the fact that the work is, as a rule, painlessly done by means of a judicious use of local anæsthetics. Thus extractions, "drilling," and removal of nerves can be done without any pain whatever. Before dismissing a child (after treatment) a quite usual question is, "Did I give you pain?" or "Did you feel your teeth coming out?" Almost always the answer came, "No, sir," or "Very little, sir," and the child goes away comforted. The promise of a halfpenny or a penny to buy sweets (!) has an excellent effect. One baby of seven summers had some cavities filled, to which she objected strongly; but a kiss and a coin—chiefly the latter—purchased her forgiveness, and we parted quite good friends.

"It is essential to remember that, however desirous one may be to save the children's teeth, one must keep in mind the fact that there is a little sensitive nerve and a little frightened child at the end of each tooth. On the other hand, though one must be tender to the little ones, kindness must not be overdone. For many mistake kindness for weakness, and take advantage accordingly."

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