

that if the teeth of the children were kept in good condition, and this is easily possible if they are inspected at the age of three, one of the most potent causes of consumption would be removed.

I am convinced that the prevention of dental caries will do more directly and indirectly towards the prevention of tuberculosis than any other measure that has yet been conceived.

I think I have said enough for you to see that all accessories such as environment and the supply of food will utterly fail to produce appetite and digestion of food, and that drugs, serums, immunization cannot produce any permanent results as long as the patient continues to infect himself from his septic mouth.

The work of the dental surgeon consists in the extraction of hopeless septic teeth and roots, the filling in of all cavities in the teeth themselves, the removal of tartar and the instruction of the patient in oral prophylaxis. It is in this last important matter we seek the co-operation of nurses intelligently instructed.

The toothbrush is a useful instrument if one knows how to use it; it is useless or even harmful if used improperly.

Take a comb used for the hair. It has teeth; if these are dirty how would you clean them with a brush? Certainly not in the way the toothbrush is generally used.

The brush would be applied along the length of the teeth, not across, nor up and down, but in the one direction towards the free ends of the teeth. Just so the teeth in the mouth. The accidental friction of the gum in this direction is beneficial, any other way is harmful.

Tooth powders and mouth washes are not required, because the saliva itself is sufficient, but I do not condemn their use because they assist the patient and nurse and make the operation rather easier and pleasanter. It is the duty of the dental surgeon to remove septic roots, to fill all cavities in the teeth and to supply artificial substitutes where required.

The latter must be sterilized every day, and ordinary washing will not do this. They require to be vigorously scrubbed with, say, Hudson's extract of soap in hot water at least once a day. "A tooth in the head is worth two on a plate."

A celebrated physician relates how his grandfather who had no teeth enjoyed eating toast. I also lately sat opposite a healthy-looking lady in Brussels who, before the table d'hôte dinner, slipped a complete set of artificial teeth she was wearing for appearance evidently, into her handbag and then set to and enjoyed the dinner just like other people.

I mention these facts to impress the point that the marked improvement in health obtained by the removal of septic teeth takes place immediately, and is not due to the artificial aids which may be supplied.

As drink is given as one of the causes of tuberculosis, it is as well to mention here that the restoration of the function of mastication will often cure the thirst or craving for alcohol.

In conclusion, the nurse herself must have a clean mouth for many reasons.

First, if her mouth contains septic roots, carious cavities or dirty plates, or she has pockets with pus-exuding pyorrhœa, she is liable to be infected easily herself, and she also carries about infection to others.

Further, she will occasionally be interrupted in her work by toothache, and be disfigured by accidents to her artificial framework.

I may be saying a hard thing, but I think every nurse should have at least twelve sound teeth in the upper jaw and ten in the lower, and this is necessary in all the Services.

Why should nurses be exempt when their duties are more dangerous and arduous?

Physical efficiency is necessary to your calling, and a long service is unattainable without the power of mastication.

The lecture was illustrated by means of the epiadiascope.

---

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

### WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF A NURSE IN PREPARATION FOR, DURING, AND AFTER LABOUR?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Annie Aspinall, Gladstone Street, Crook, Durham.

#### PRIZE PAPER.

The nurse's duties in preparation, during and after labour, are:—To remember that her function is to assist the natural process; throughout labour, she must use her observation, and kindness, and cleanliness, in every detail.

An enema should be given to unload the bowels and hasten the delivery. It also helps to avert septic danger. The patient's genitals must be well cleansed after an action, and everything offensive removed from room. The nurse should wash her patient thoroughly if time will allow, paying special attention to the external genitals, using plenty of soap and water, with lysol added. A clean nightdress should be put on, and the bed made with clean linen. If no mackintosh can be had, clean brown paper, and an old sheet (which has been

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)