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LECTURE ON DENTAL HYGIENE.

On Feb. 21st, Mrs. Atherton Earp gave a lecture on Dental Hygiene at 194, Queen's Gate. Miss Allbutt, who took the Chair, said that Mrs. Earp needed no introduction to an R.B.N.A. audience; she was well known as one of its very active Members. Miss Allbutt reminded the Members that, in addition to having held various appointments at Welfare Centres, Mrs. Earp was a Medallist of the Royal Sanitary Institute, a writer on Hygiene, lecturer to various Public Bodies, and had, for some years, been Educational Organiser to Infant Welfare Centres in Hampstead.

In commencing, Mrs. Earp stated that it was an extraordinary thing that, in spite of the fact that Dental Hygiene was taught to children almost from babyhood, there was no decline in the extent to which people were suffering from dental disease. It had long been inculcated that "clean teeth do not decay," and the phrase was indeed hackneyed; if you ask a school child how often the teeth should be cleansed, he will promptly and automatically reply "After every meal." We have Dental Clinics for our school children, and yet dental caries is as prevalent as ever. The Lecturer stated that she thought the cause lay, not so much in the amount of attention given or not given to the teeth, but rather, she considered, that food must be at the bottom of the problem. For one thing, she considered that children now have far too many sweets; these could be obtained at a very moderate cost and they enter very largely into a child's diet, especially as they are so frequently taken between meals, with the result that the child is less inclined to eat fat, and few parents take the trouble to insist upon his doing so. In Elizabethan times, sugar was a tremendous luxury; in our grandmothers' time it sold at about one and eightpence a pound, but now sugar, in a thousand different varieties of sweets, can be had at a very moderate cost, the result being an increased consumption of it.

Children do not have sufficient hard food.

Another point, said the lecturer, is that children do not have sufficient hard food; they are not taught to finish their meal with some hard food, such as an apple, twice toasted bread, ryvita, etc.; the object in recommending such food is that, by the use of it at the end of the meal, circulation is promoted within and around the teeth and also the teeth are cleansed of the soft foods which otherwise are apt to form a paste about their edges or crevices, and fermentation produces acids which eat into the enamel and bring about decay. Mrs. Earp stated that in her travels abroad she had been struck by the healthy condition of the teeth of the people who do chew hard foods; Maoris, for instance, who seemed evermore to be chewing at some hard substance, have teeth ground down almost to the gums, but they are perfectly clean and free from decay. Vegetable salads are excellent for the well-being of the body, and good tooth cleansers, too. Mrs. Earp stated

that she had a great quarrel with flour, for it seemed almost impossible to get people to buy any but the self-raising flour; if they wish to use self-raising flour they should make their own baking powder to add to ordinary flour. The standard bread of the war period was very good and gave a certain amount of "roughage," necessary to digestion. Another difficulty, both as regards the teeth and general hygiene, lies in the fact that children still do not sufficiently chew their food; many of them roll a mouthful perhaps four times through the mouth and swallow it; Gladstone's habit of chewing food thirty times was much more hygienic. The Lecturer stated that her second quarrel lay with "the grandmothers"; over and over again, when she had tried to preach hygiene, she found herself up against habits which the mothers contend to be right because *their* mothers did the same thing. Furthermore, mothers are still not paying a sufficient amount of attention to the kind of foods given to children; drinking with meals is a bad habit, especially at dinner, because it tends to decrease the flow of saliva. We should pour out from one to two pints of saliva in twenty-four hours, and if fluid is supplied in some other way the salivary glands so act that an insufficient quantity of saliva is mixed with the food and the whole nutrition of the body is arrested; nature is very curious, if we cease to make demands on her she reduces her supply. Often tinned foods are more or less ready-made fluid foods, and cause the teeth and salivary glands to grow lazy. It is quite possible to buy a whole meal in tins and bottles, and the Lecturer stated that she once met an engaged man who told her that he first admired his fiancée because of the rapidity with which, one evening when he visited her, she produced a meal. "Although," said the Lecturer, "I knew that she was absolutely incapable of cooking a meal. I expect by now he has found out how it is done." It was to be remembered, said the Lecturer, that, with the exception of tomatoes, most foods lose their vitamins in the process of canning. We have lots of advice as to not using foods from bulging or badly soldered tins and about thoroughly aerating tinned foods before eating them, and so on; these facts might be quite valuable as information, but the vital point stands that no tin bears the warning label "no chewing required."

Methods of cleaning teeth.

Mrs. Earp, among other diagrams, showed one indicating methods of cleaning the teeth, and emphasised the fact that the backward and forward movement of the tooth-brush is of little value; the movement should be upward and downward and across the grinding margins. The cleansing agent to be used is not very important, but as a general rule one might say that people with soft teeth should use a soft paste, and care should be taken that the brush is not too hard. One should, indeed, keep two brushes and always use a dry one on each occasion, as it is then more likely to be fresh and clean. In brushing the teeth

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