

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.