

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 Ottofy, 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. Ottofy 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. Ottofy 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 insistently 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