

in the way of its introduction into large schools where special water-taps and drain arrangements would be necessary before several hundreds of children could clean their teeth. The practical difficulties are much less in small schools.

The dental hospitals have given very valuable help in the large centres. Many hundreds of school-children have in them been treated for dental decay free or at a minimum cost. In some districts, for instance, head teachers have been authorized to recommend school-children for dental treatment, their recommendation requiring countersignature by a private dentist who is satisfied that the parents could not afford private dental fees. There are drawbacks, obvious enough, in this system. Many parents hesitate to proclaim their inability to pay privately who nevertheless are seriously inconvenienced by heavy dentists' bills. Also a number of parents and children, who in the first flush of enthusiasm secure a recommendation and present themselves at the dental hospital for treatment, have their ardour damped by the long and dreary times spent waiting their turn. The way to actual dental treatment should be made as short, direct, and simple as possible. Large numbers of cases reported by the Medical Inspectors have been taken to the ordinary dentist by the parents.

What suggestions have the Medical Inspectors to make with regard to the treatment of dental caries amongst school-children?—We are strongly of opinion that more must be done along the lines of preventive treatment. The problem being primarily one of diet and cleanliness (see former remarks) the public must be instructed in these matters. The importance is always explained at our addresses to mothers. The School Nurses also give advice during their visits to the homes. An investigation recently made by one of the Medical Inspectors reveals the fact that the destruction of teeth by faulty feeding begins at a very early age. Of twenty-two children of from three to four years of age, thirteen, or 59 per cent., had four or more decayed teeth; among sixty-two others of from five to six years of age there were forty-one, or 66 per cent., of similar cases; and among forty-two of from six to seven years of age there were thirty-eight, or 90 per cent., of such cases. Diet is the primary cause.

Dental Clinics.—With regard to curative treatment we feel that though the existing dental hospitals are doing valuable work for school-children they are not sufficient, and that the school-children require special school dental clinics, to which they can have direct access through the recommendation of the school medical staff. There should be no delay, and no question as to private means. Many parents would gladly take their children to a school clinic who would hesitate to attend a dental hospital although unable to pay private fees. Further—and this is important—the treatment times can be arranged specially to suit school-children, and to avoid unnecessary interference with their school-work.

In the country districts it might be possible to arrange for treatment at special contract rates (free if necessary) with local dentists. This has already been done with great success in one school at least. The following is an extract from the *New Zealand Journal of Education* giving particulars of the experiment carried out by Mr. Cron, headmaster of the Kakanui School (Otago):—

“When one of the Department's Medical Inspectors visited the school early in 1914 she reported that the teeth of quite a number of the pupils were in a very poor condition. Seeing that Kakanui was distant some eight or nine miles from Oamaru, where the nearest dentists resided, and that a considerable time would be spent by the parents in taking their children to Oamaru for dental treatment, Mr. Cron arranged with an Oamaru dentist to visit the school during the following week to examine the teeth of the children. Mr. Cron advised the pupils of the dentist's intended visit, making it very clear that their parents would not be committed to any expense by this visit. On the appointed day the dentist arrived, and examined about fifty pupils out of a roll number of seventy. Mr. Cron wrote down, at the dictation of the dentist, the requirements in each case, whether extraction of temporary or permanent teeth, or ‘fillings,’ or ‘cleanings.’ These ‘requirements’ were sent to each parent, after the dentist had indicated what would be the approximate cost.

“The next step was to wait till ‘orders’ came in. When one afternoon's work was in sight the dentist arrived, and found that during the previous two or three days additional orders had been sent in by the parents, who were willing to avail themselves of the dentist's services when they knew he was to come, but were unwilling to pledge themselves before they were certain that he would arrive. The dining-room of the teacher's residence was placed at the dentist's disposal, while Miss Cron acted as assistant. The pupils went out in turn, were ‘treated,’ and returned in such a way ‘that interference with the school-work was reduced to the absolute minimum.’

“The impression made by the dentist's first visit was so favourable that orders came in more rapidly, the result being that for about seventeen Thursday afternoons the dentist was kept busy. In this time he extracted approximately ninety temporary and permanent teeth, and filled about half as many.

“Mr. Cron says, ‘I have an important observation to make, and it is this: that it is quite certain that once the oral conditions of the children of a school are made as nearly perfect as possible, then the great bulk of the work is accomplished. All that needs to follow consists of preventive measures and other slight attentions from time to time. If dentists were secured to do for every child in the Dominion all that was required, then, when this was done, a staff of dentists only one-fourth as strong numerically could successfully cope with the problem of maintaining and even raising the level at which the first staff of dentists left their work.’ Mr. Cron also mentions that since these visits of the dentist absences from school on account of toothache are almost unknown.”

AFFECTIONS OF SPECIAL-SENSE ORGANS.

Defective Vision and Defective Hearing.—The existence of such defects is a serious drawback to school progress, and their adequate treatment is a matter of urgency.