

THE HYGIENIC MEANS OF PRESERVING THE TEETH.

BY G. O. FISET, D. D. S., QUEBEC CITY.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 328.

The confectionary colored with mineral substances is a poison to the system, and also acts upon the dental structures in two ways ; a rechrystallization of the sugar takes place on mastication, small particles of which being forced into the fissures (consequent upon the malformation of the enamel of the grinding surfaces of the bicuspid and molars, or by accident) and remain stationary ; the first thing occurring is the immediate action of the colouring matter, the second is the acetous fermentation of the sugar. The common or cheap confectionary is frequently coloured with mineral substances, but I believe not as much in this country as in other countries, judging by the very few cases of poisoning on record from the eating of confectionary. The substances mostly used are the carbonate of copper, sulphide of mercury, &c. Confectionary or candies colourless or coloured with vegetable substances act upon the teeth only in one way, that is, by the fermentation of the sugar into acetic acid.* Ripe fruits also act by acetous fermentation. In all cases where starchy or saccharine food is taken, *ptyaline* or the animal principle of the saliva acts as a ferment, but so long as such does not become stationary in or about the teeth there is no danger to apprehend.

Although I believe that once the dentinal tissue has become diseased, and an acid is formed by the decomposition of its salts and a degeneration of its organic matter, too much care cannot be taken to prevent the formation of acetic acid by the fermentation of sugar, therefore, after any saccharine food has been taken, luke-warm water should be recommended to be used in order to dissolve the sugar which has lodged into the fissures and other portions of defective teeth. Sweet beverages do not act deleteriously upon the dental organs, because their transition through the mouth is too sudden for any fermentative action to take place. Picromel is one of the animal principles contained in bile, so that vomiting of that fluid alone cannot cause any injurious effect upon the teeth, as that principle pertains to the class of imperfect sugars. The drinking of very cold water, or the eating of ice cream or other substances of a similar kind, immediately followed

* The confectionary coming under that head is generally coloured with cochineal.