

to medical as well as dental work, and to have had rather frequent opportunities to observe cases of difficult dentition, and the effect of an intelligent use of the gum lancet as a therapeutic measure for the relief of disorders incident thereto; hence my faith in the efficacy of the operation is the outgrowth of personal experience as well as observation, and if I shall seem to advocate it somewhat dogmatically, it is because I am convinced that the facts sustain my belief.

The argument of Magitot and his followers, it seems to me, is easily demolished after an investigation of his major premise, viz.: that dentition is a purely physiological process. The answer to this is simply that dentition, while it is generally a physiological process, is not always so, and like all physiological processes, if interrupted or interfered with, may become pathological in its expression. We have only to call to mind the many accidents and fatal pathological phenomena which may attend parturition to find sufficient proof of the utter fallacy of Magitot's proposition.

The prurption of a tooth is a complex process, and includes a number of factors which, when they proceed harmoniously, produce no untoward results, and the teething process in its physiological expression is unattended with disturbances to the health status of the infant. A perfectly normal process of dentition rarely occurs. There is generally a condition of nervous excitation attendant upon the teething period, which in many cases is so slight as to express itself only as a somewhat increased nervous irritability in the child, productive of wakefulness, etc. Or the nervous irritation may be so increased in degree as to cause the most alarming and even fatal consequences. The period of teething is generally made manifest by this increased nervous irritability, and an increased flow of saliva from the mouth. The gums may be more or less congested over the presenting teeth, the positions of which are usually clearly discernible by reason of the gum being elevated and made tense by the erupting tooth crown beneath. The tumefaction or congestion of the overlying gum may be entirely absent, even in cases where the most profound manifestations are present, due wholly to the peripheral nervous irritation caused by the advancing tooth. It is this class of cases where the local manifestations are but slight, and the general disturbance is profound, that has been the cause of the controversy which has been waged around the question of gum lancing. Those who hold to the belief of Forchheimer deny that any relief of general systemic disturbances can follow the operation in such cases. Where they have to deal with a case presenting a congested condition of the gum tissues, they admit that the operation may be useful by letting blood, but no further. The explanation of this belief is not far to seek. It is due to the fact that they understand the operation of gum lancing to mean a superficial scarification of the gum tissue, to empty the congested vessels of the parts and so reduce the local hyperæmia.