

SCIENCE DEPARTMENT.

[A series of notes prepared for the Monthly, by Henry Montgomery, M.A., Coll. Inst., Toronto.]

A CONTRIBUTOR to *Chambers's Journal*, in a few sensible remarks, calls attention to the children's teeth. He very truly says, "In the nature of things it cannot be expected that children should understand the value of their own teeth; and our knowledge, or painful experience, ought to be employed to guard them from the consequences of their natural ignorance." How sad it is to see so many young mouths disfigured with gold, silver, amalgam, and decaying teeth, before their owners have arrived at the age of maturity, and often even before the age of fifteen years! Either parents or family physicians, or both, are culpable in this important matter, a matter which affects the comfort and health of the individuals themselves, as well as the comfort and enjoyment of those persons with whom they come in contact. Children are permitted to do all sorts of things with their teeth,—crack nuts, break hard sugar candies, untie knots, gnaw slate-pencils, and cut pins; but they are not naturally given to cleaning them at regular and stated times. The teeth are produced at a time of life when they begin to be needed, just as soon as the body needs solid food that must undergo the process of mastication. They are likewise developed at the commencement of the alimentary tract, in precisely the right place, evidently for the accomplishment of a particular purpose, the breaking down and separation of the food into small portions in order that the salivary and gastric fluids may the more readily perform their duties towards it. If, then, there is need for the teeth to do a certain kind and amount of labour in youth, is there not also need for them to perform that labour in adult life and in advanced years? Do the stomach and assistant digestive organs gain sufficient strength to enable them perfectly to execute the same or an increased amount of work

without the cutting and grinding aid of the dental apparatus? And why must the teeth yield and decay long before the remaining organs of the body are expected to show symptoms of decline? With few exceptions, the human family might all retain good healthy teeth until past the prime of life, say up to fifty or sixty years, if they would only give those organs "fair play." There are mentioned two principal causes of such general premature decay,—*crowding* of the teeth together, and a lack of *cleaning*. They sometimes grow more rapidly than the jaws, and consequently become irregular and hard to be kept clean. But besides this, there is another evil arising from their rapid growth and want of room. They press so closely and firmly against one another that the hard protective external covering—the enamel—cannot be evenly deposited over the entire surface of the crown. Again, many uneven teeth, displaced by crowding of the permanent set, or it may be by neglecting to extract the temporary ones to make room for the permanent, often continue quite useless throughout life. Hence crowding should be hindered by the timely removal of the superfluous ones. With respect to the second cause assigned, it may be said that they ought to be carefully cleaned every time immediately after being used. A pointed quill or a piece of soft wood may serve as a tooth-pick to remove coarse particles and prepare the teeth for a wash with a soft brush and tepid water. The brush ought mostly to be moved *vertically*, and not too often in a horizontal direction across the teeth. The cleansing process should form a part of the toilet, and needs to occupy but a minute or two after each meal. But especially should the mouth be thoroughly washed before retiring to rest at night. After partaking of acid foods or