

A noted bacteriologist has estimated that in a certain very unclean mouth there were not less than one billion one hundred and forty million bacteria. Think of the atmosphere of a room inhabited by a person with such a mouth! Some of these germs are more poisonous or disease-producing than others, but it is a fact that the human mouth when in a diseased condition contains many of the most virulent germs known. This is particularly true of germs associated with decayed teeth having abscesses at their roots, and those associated with pus which may be pressed out from around the necks of the teeth. These conditions are exceedingly common, and it is an accepted fact that dental disorders are the most wide-spread that afflict the human race, and that many obscure ailments affecting the general system—such as chronic dyspepsia, gastritis, certain nervous affections, and general diseased conditions of the blood, as pernicious anemia—may be traced to a diseased mouth. This kind of mouth is the result of failure to make proper use of the tooth-brush, and of failing to consult a dentist when decayed teeth, or red and swollen gums are first noticed.

It seems hard to impress the public with the seriousness of these facts. The subject is one of great importance from the standpoint of public health. It is second to none that concern the physical and mental welfare of the people, as it affects the entire community. These mouth troubles are alarmingly frequent in the children of the public schools, and in most localities no adequate measures have been adopted, up to the present, to cure the evil or to arrest its progress. Great efforts are being made to stamp out tuberculosis; much has been done to prevent cholera, diphtheria, rabies, yellow fever, typhoid, meningitis, and other preventable diseases; but how little has been done in most places to rescue the school-children from the dangers of mouth bacteria. Statistics show that over ninety per cent. of the children in public schools have decayed teeth; or abscessed teeth, the pus from which is being constantly swallowed.

In this province, Toronto is one of the few places where the mouths of the children, rich and poor, are systematically cared for. In other places the rich are privileged to have healthy mouths, and even in such cases neglect is frequently the rule.

Without a doubt, the spread of such infectious diseases as diphtheria, influenza, pneumonia, bronchitis and tuberculosis, in the public schools, is greatly increased by the unsanitary condition of the mouths of many of the children. The campaign against the spread of tuberculosis meets with many obstacles that are hard to overcome; but in a campaign against mouth infection all that is needed is regular inspection of the school children's mouths, instruction to the children in the proper preventive treatment, and a dental clinic maintained by the municipality, where the mouths of the children whose parents cannot afford to pay for the work, will be put in a condition of health.

As to the effects of an ill-kept mouth on the mouth itself: probably the most common is toothache. Toothache is too well known to require any discussion; the more serious conditions are those that follow the ache. Toothache is succeeded frequently by a swollen jaw, the swelling being caused by pus at the end of the root of the tooth. Generally the pus discharges into the mouth through a so-called gum-boil. Though there may be no discharge into the mouth, the pus is absorbed by the blood and carried to all parts of the body, and sets up many diseases, of which mention will be made later. Swollen glands in the necks are very often caused by pus which travels down to them from the abscessed tooth. The tubercular germ is more or less constant in the mouth, and often becomes