

APPERANCE OF MILK-TEETH.

The first set of teeth, or milk-teeth as they are called, are twenty in number; they usually appear in pairs, and those of the lower jaw generally precede the corresponding ones of the upper. The first of the milk-teeth is generally cut about the sixth or seventh month, and the last of the set at various periods from the twentieth to the thirtieth months. Thus the whole period occupied by the first dentition may be estimated at from a year and a half to two years. The process varies, however, in different individuals, both as to its whole duration, and as to the periods and order in which the teeth make their appearance. It is unnecessary, however, to add more upon this point.

Their developement is a natural process. It is too frequently, however, rendered a painful and difficult one, by errors in the management of the regimen and health of the infant, previously to the coming of the teeth, and during the process itself.

Thus, chiefly in consequence of injudicious management, it is made the most critical period of childhood. Not that I believe the extent of mortality fairly traceable to it, is by any means so great as has been stated; for it is rated as high as one sixth of all the children who undergo it. Still, no one doubts that first dentition is frequently a period of great danger to the infant. It therefore becomes a very important question to an anxious and affectionate mother, how the dangers and difficulties of teething can in any degree be diminished, or, if possible, altogether prevented. A few hints upon this subject, then, may be useful. I shall consider, first, the management of the infant, when teething is accomplished without difficulty; and, secondly, the management of the infant when it is attended with difficulty.

Management of the infant when teething is without difficulty.

In the child of a healthy constitution, which has been properly, that is, naturally, fed, upon the milk of its mother alone, the symptoms attending teething will be of the mildest kind, and the management of the infant most simple and easy.

Symptoms:- The symptoms of natural dentition (which this may be fairly called) are, an increased flow of saliva, with swelling and heat of the gums, and occasionally flushing of the cheeks. The child frequently thrusts its fingers, or any thing within its grasp, into its mouth. Its thirst is increased, and it takes the breast more frequently, though, from the tender state of the gums, for shorter periods than usual. It is fretful and restless; and sudden fits of

crying and occasional starting from sleep, with a slight tendency to vomiting, and even looseness of the bowels, are not uncommon. Many of these symptoms often precede the appearance of the tooth by several weeks, and indicate that what is called "breeding the teeth" is going on. In such cases, the symptoms disappear in a few days, to recur again when the tooth approaches the surface of the gum.

Treatment:- The management of the infant in this case is very simple, and seldom calls for the interference of the medical attendant. The child ought to be much in the open air, and well exercised: the bowels should be kept freely open with castor oil; and be always gently relaxed at this time. Cold sponging employed daily, and the surface of the body rubbed dry with as rough a flannel as the delicate skin of the child will bear; friction being very useful. The breast should be given often, but not for long at a time; the thirst will thus be allayed, the gums kept moist and relaxed, and their irritation soothed, without the stomach being overloaded. The mother must also carefully attend, at this time, to her own health and diet, and avoid all stimulant food or drinks.

From the moment dentition begins, pressure on the gums will be found to be agreeable to the child, by numbing the sensibility and dulling the pain. For this purpose coral is usually employed, or a piece of orris-root, or scraped liquorice root; a flat ivory ring, however, is far safer and better, for there is no danger of its being thrust into the eyes or nose. Gentle friction of the gums, also, by the finger of the nurse, is pleasing to the infant; and, as it seems to have some effect in allaying irritation, may be frequently resorted to. In France, it is very much the practice to dip the liquorice-root, and other substances, into honey, or powdered sugar-candy; and in Germany, a small bag, containing a mixture of sugar and spices, is given to the infant to suck, whenever it is fretful and uneasy during teething. The constant use, however, of sweet and stimulating ingredients must do injury to the stomach, and renders their employment very objectionable.