

THE PEARLY PORTALS OF THE HUMAN CITADEL.

By MR. GEORGE THOMSON, L.D.S.,

*Hon. Dental Surgeon to the Royal Hospital
for Diseases of the Chest, London.*

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE HOSPITAL TO TRAINED NURSES.

A certain writer has said, "They say there are no such things as fairies, or that there are fairies no longer, but they know not what they say. The original of the fairies sung by poets was found and is still, among those amiable mortals who knead bread with energy, mend rents with cheerfulness, nurse the sick with smiles, put witchery into a ribbon and genius into a stew." I have to speak to you to-night of very real and common things. I shall deal more with the patient than the disease. "It is as well to see what kind of patient the disease has got as to know what kind of disease the patient has." The doctor may ask to examine almost any of the organs of the body except the mouth. Somehow people are very sensitive upon this point and resent intrusion into this cavity. Now the mouth is, by reason of its thermal conditions, its atmosphere, its accessibility and abundance of nutriment, favourable for the incubation of micro-organisms, as Sir John Bland Sutton has said, "a veritable bacterial zoological garden."

Dr. Newsholme has said, "I believe the great triumphs of the future will be in the direction of personal hygiene."

I want you to consider for a moment that the one condition of continuing life is Nutrition. This is so obvious, that to state it simply awakens surprise, for we are told so much about fresh air, exercise, clothing, healthy houses to live in, cleanliness, hot and cold baths, massage, climate, &c., that we forget the one essential, and in order to make this superlative, I want to tell you that a child may sleep on damp straw in a dark cellar where windows are never opened and no sunlight ever penetrates, be ill clad, run about barefooted and find its food in the dustbins of a city, and yet have a healthy digestion with a good appetite and escape all the illnesses and emaciation, with nervous troubles added, of the pampered child in a luxurious home.

1. Food is the one essential thing.
2. For this reason the mouth, the orifice of the alimentary tract, is the most important organ of the body. Eyes, ears and nose may be dispensed with.

If in health the mouth and its glands, and the teeth which break up the food are important, how much more important this becomes when the body has been reduced and we wish to build up what has been lost in wasting diseases such as tuberculosis. No one can understand disease until he has studied health, and the normal condition. A normal adult human has 32 teeth, 16 in each jaw, all, including the incisors, antagonising with teeth of the opposing jaw.

You have heard of the old lady who said she thanked God that though she had only two teeth they were opposite one another.

(Slides of surfaces and occlusion were shown.)

The arrangement of the mucous membrane, tightly stretched over the teeth, constitutes a vulnerable point.

The teeth are the pearly portals of the human citadel, and here judge and jury sit to pass judgment on all that would enter.

In the tongue are the organs of taste.

The teeth have the special function of judging as to the hardness or softness of food, as well as temperature, and have the power of reducing it to the required softness and smallness to be swallowed.

The Parotid and Sublingual glands pour out about three pints of fluid daily into the mouth to moisten the food, to effect chemical changes in the food itself, and clean and purify the mouth and free the teeth from debris, and matter which would ferment and decompose if left to remain in the mouth.

The saliva plays the rôle of a cleansing fluid; it secretes from disgust as well as from pleasing tastes.

Substances entering the mouth start a secretion of saliva solely because they excite definite physiological sensitivities.

The nerves of the mouth have special and definite functions, and are closely connected with the process of digestion.

Pawlow says, "The specific excitability of the peripheral endings of the salivary nerves is very susceptible."

Before children have their tastes perverted by older people, who ought to know better, their teeth are clean and white like a monkey's. But as Dr. Sim Wallace says, "as we know that it is certain types of food which tend to keep the mouth physiologically clean, and prevent caries, and other types of food which tend to lodge and undergo fermentation in the crevices of the teeth which cause caries, we are able to claim that dental caries is essentially a preventable disease." We therefore conclude

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