

but these conditions do not concern the examining physician. Probably not one in a thousand, in reporting upon the application of a man twenty-five years of age, would think of mentioning the fact that he had lost, say, all his upper teeth and half his lower ones, although after giving it a little thought few would probably care to dispute the statement that the loss of the teeth before the twenty-fifth year will on the average shorten the life of an individual by at least several years. If this be true, no apology is needed for calling the attention of medical men to the dental deterioration that has been referred to, for discussing its probable causes, and for suggesting possible remedies.

In endeavoring to ascertain why it is that imperfect dentures are so common and dental diseases so alarmingly prevalent, it must be borne in mind that although the teeth are vital organs, developed and nourished very much like the other organs of the body, they differ from them widely in susceptibility to disease. While other organs may be delicate early in life and afterward become quite strong and healthy, or *vice versa*, the teeth, if not impaired by disease, remain the same, with the exception, perhaps, of a slight increase of density as age advances. All the other organs of the body, too, including the bones, are endowed with recuperative powers whereby injuries are to a greater or less extent repaired; but the teeth possess no such attributes, and are apparently governed by somewhat different laws from those that regulate other parts of the animal economy. Teeth that are perfect in form and structure are rarely, if ever, attacked by decay. It is only where the enamel is defective that dental caries can obtain a foothold. As the teeth are developed early in life, it is during childhood that those influences are exerted which by interfering with their development predispose them to disease, and it is to childhood, therefore, that we must look for the causes of dental deterioration.

Scientists tell us that use and disuse have much to do with the development of organs, and that with the progress of civilization the brain has increased and the jaws have decreased in size. The wisdom teeth from disuse have degenerated and become rudimentary; the canines, being no longer needed to tear flesh from the bone and do other heavy work, have become smaller and less prominent; the teeth in general have become soft and chalky and very susceptible to decay. This, they say, is the result of the substitution of soft, well-cooked food for that which required vigorous use of the teeth and masticatory muscles, and as there seems to be no likelihood of civilized man going back to primeval methods of preparing food, the inference is that dental deterioration is one of the prices we are obliged to pay for a high state of civilization. But use and disuse not only modify the size and structure of organs when persisted in for a series of generations,