

Teeth and Toothache.

Of teeth it may be said that that man is happiest who is unconscious of them. We do not mean as an ornament. It is true that some peoples, as Montaigne says, "take great care to black their teeth, and hate to see them white; whilst others paint them red." Europeans have a taste of their own in the matter, and love to see them white. For proof consult contemporary fiction *passim*, where even the villains have a fine set to show, and know it. Let Herrick sing of the rubies and pearls of his Julia's mouth; teeth for the present purpose are not jewels. They are to be regarded as the "*fons et origo mali*," and that evil is toothache.

Toothache is as old as sin, and as universal. To erring man it might figure as a form of final torture. It must have been part of the punishment of our primeval parents, whose doom we inherit. The first that an infant knows of teeth is pain; from the cradle to the grave they are an active source of annoyance. Some there be, indeed, who say not without pride that they never had a touch of toothache in their lives. But call not a man happy till he is dead. Hereafter writhing in anguish, they shall assuredly repent the premature boast. And there are strong men and the like who misuse their teeth to lift surprising weights, or, emulating that terror of the Spaniards and hero of the *Revenge* Sir Richard Grenville, chew glasses up without a grimace. "Blind mouths" (to pervert Milton's phrase), they do not look to the end—the fevered gums, the dull unceasing ache, the shooting spasm, as if a red-hot needle were thrust into the brain. If a man does altogether escape the fell disease, one is tempted to ascribe to him a low order of nervous organization. He must be "only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts." Nay, he is even lower than that, for animals, too, have toothache, and especially such as possess a high degree of intelligence. The dog and the horse are well-known sufferers. On the authority of a quaint old French book on the subject, we may add the wolf; and the hippopotamus "endures quite a great pain from its teeth, so that it is constrained to get out of the water to find a remedy."

This book is one of the earliest modern authorities on toothache that we have discovered. It is scientific, as science went in 1622. Its author, one Maistre Arnauld Gilles, was apparently court dentist