

The Effect of Exercise upon the Teeth.

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The action of the American Medical Association in establishing a dental section, and thereby recognizing dentistry as a specialty of medicine, has not only conferred dignity upon that calling and secured for its practitioners recognition as professional men, but it has also furnished them with an incentive to familiarize themselves with those broad principles that underlie the practice of medicine. On the other hand it has called the attention of physicians to the fact that the condition of the teeth has much to do with the condition of the general system, and patients are nowadays referred by them to the dentist quite as frequently as to the surgeon. But although physicians are beginning to recognize the seriousness of diseases of the teeth, and to impress upon their patients the importance of having them properly attended to whenever they show signs of decay, the fact that a rapid deterioration of these organs is now going on and that serious results are likely to follow this deterioration has been almost entirely overlooked. A little inquiry and investigation, however, must convince anyone that such a change for the worse is taking place. Children rarely have as good teeth as their parents had at the same age, but on the contrary their teeth are often almost hopelessly decayed before the dentures of their parents show signs of impairment. A century ago the city of New York, with a population of about fifty thousand, had only one dentist, and although much less attention was paid to the teeth then than is paid to them now, there is abundant evidence to show that our forefathers had better teeth than we have. Dr. Hammond tells us that the coming man will be hairless and toothless, and the tendency certainly seems to be in that direction. The conservation of the natural teeth is the end toward which every intelligent and conscientious dentist directs his efforts, but if the quality of the teeth continues to deteriorate the replacement of lost dental tissue must gradually give way to the replacement of lost dental organs. Every physician knows, of course, that this would not be conducive to health, but that medical men generally do not realize how important a bearing the condition of the teeth has upon the health and longevity of an individual is shown by the fact that in examining applicants for life insurance no question regarding the condition of the mouth is ever asked. The teeth may be so badly decayed that the proper mastication of food is impossible, the saliva may be vitiated, the gums and alveoli may be the seat of abscesses that are continually discharging pus,