

I have not the intention of writing a work of considerable length, but a mere essay on dental hygiene, and I shall abstain from those long technical words, more or less irregular; some would seem like India-rubber, on account of the facility with which they are lengthened at pleasure. My object is, therefore, to awaken the attention of the public on one of their most precious advantages, while, in order to preserve them, they display the most incomprehensible indifference. Nevertheless, this subject concerns, at the same time, the cleanliness, health and rest which are obtained only by the absence of pain and the most constant care. We do not agree, I believe, on what really constitutes beauty. Our different ways of seeing and judging render its definition an object of great difficulty. All the parts which compose the human figure vary in their form to the utmost extent. That is why we are prevented from clearly defining it, and describing how their harmony produces what we agree to call a handsome or ugly face. So we are induced to say that beauty is only and properly regarded as such by a general and implied convention; but that convention is unspecified according to different climates—for instance, a narrow forehead, thick lips, a broad flat nose, wool instead of hair, are the marks of beauty among Africans, and among us, signs of ugliness. But teeth are said to be handsome, when they are white and well arranged. When Nature made them handsome, it took everywhere the same care of setting them in rosy gums; and the carmine of the lips set off their whiteness still more. They are not only ornamental but also very useful to health. Many, however, seem to be ignorant of that important truth. Nevertheless the slightest attention is needed to convince one's self that teeth are absolutely necessary to the preservation of the animal economy, since they are designed for one of our principal functions. How many teeth were broken by imprudence and vain show, especially among those set for the trituration of food, and consequently for the easy digestion of the stomach, which is only the secondary agent and above all the protector of health; hence if it is deprived of the preparatory work of the jaw, and receiving but food half trituated, its various functions are laborious—wasting slowly its elasticity, it grows weak, and loses that vigor which, when once lost, cannot be restored by the most powerful tonics, and the richest of victuals. "You are a foe to your life if you do not masticate well" says the Latin proverb. Those who have good teeth and do not masticate well can profit by this lesson. But what can we say to those who have bad ones? They must guard against that difficulty by dint of care, since a good mastication is so necessary to health. Yes, when the uneasiness, the bad digestion and the weakness of the stomach set in, one says: "If I had