

INTRODUCTORY.

THE problem of preventing or controlling caries of the teeth is one which enters very materially into the health, longevity, and happiness of the human race. Apparently we are not yet able to prevent decay, and it thus becomes imperative that we study the best means of checking and controlling it. When caries occurs on any surface of a tooth the dentist should study carefully the conditions which brought it about, and should aim in his operations so to change those conditions that caries will not be likely to recur.

Too many practitioners are in the habit of following their work day after day in a thoughtless, slipshod manner, without due consideration of the principles which should underlie all operative procedures, and without a proper study of the relations of cause and effect. When failures occur, as they do in the hands of all practitioners,—some more, some less,—the most profitable lesson is not always learned thereby. No dentist should allow himself to pass over any failure, whether his own or another's, without carefully studying the particular reasons for that failure and the problems which must be solved to avoid a repetition in the future. With the clearness of vision which should eventually result from this kind of study the practitioner will be better equipped to serve his patrons, and his failures will grow perceptibly fewer. If all dentists would bring to their work a due regard for this form of observation, it would add materially to the permanence of dental service.