

**AN ESSAY ON DENTAL  
SURGERY, FOR  
POPULAR READING**

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An Essay on Dental Surgery, for Popular Reading by Geo. Watt

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Prize Essay of the Miss. Valley Ass. of Dental Surgeons.

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ON

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By GEO. WATT, D.D.S., M.D.

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## PREFACE.

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Believing that the diffusion of truth is the best means of combating error—the dissemination of knowledge—the proper method of guarding the public against the impositions of the dishonest and ignorant, the Mississippi Valley Association of Dental Surgeons offered a prize of one hundred dollars for the best popular Essay on Dental Surgery. This was awarded to the following, which has been printed and circulated among the profession, for correction and improvement. The revised copy is now issued, in accordance with the original intention.

As far as possible, technicalities are avoided. It is believed that every term, not in common use, is defined in the work. The reader will, therefore, understand each succeeding portion by his knowledge of that which precedes it. Those who read it, will, we trust, be better able to discriminate between the genuine dentist, and the pretender. He will, also, know better how to preserve his own, and the teeth of those who may be dependent on him. With these hopes, the Essay is respectfully offered to the public.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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THAT the teeth are among the most important organs of the human system, few seem to understand, and many are unwilling to believe. They are consequently neglected, become diseased, and are lost, even in early life, with a frequency really alarming to the philanthropist. Parents neglect their mouths, and their teeth become diseased, consequently the whole system is impaired, and debilitated constitutions are necessarily imparted to their offspring, whose teeth are, in turn, neglected, and fall easy victims to decay, thus transmitting increased debility to succeeding generations.

Agencies of this kind have been at work for a long period, and the consequence is, that good teeth, though fondly desired, are seldom seen. Children's teeth often decay as soon as through the gums; unweaned babes are tortured with toothache, youths, of both sexes, are toothless, and young mothers, their stomachs not able to digest unmasticated food, tormented with dyspepsia and its train of ills, patiently drag out a life of misery, for the sake of their pallid nurselings, through whom their ills are to be transmitted to unborn races.

The correction of this state of affairs requires attention to the subject, a sense of its importance, and a knowledge of the remedy. The hope of the writer is, that these pages may facilitate so desirable a result. It would seem almost wild to hope for the time when youth and beauty will be unencumbered with false teeth, when health will bloom on the mother's cheek, and the rosy hue on the lips

of childhood, yet obedience to the laws of life will not fail to produce such results. Then will the extraction of teeth, and the amputation of fingers be equally rare; then will the dental organs last through life, fulfilling the ends designed by the Creator.

The writer solicits the careful attention of the reader, while he endeavors in the following pages to illustrate and define the nature and importance of dental surgery.

Every exertion, whether of mind or body, causes a loss of tissue. There must, then, be a constant supply of material to make reparation. As the teeth perform an important office in this work, and, as their condition greatly depends on it, the process of nutrition will be briefly explained, and the organs concerned in it described.

Under the head of *dentition*, the temporary and permanent teeth, and the constitutional changes induced by their development and eruption, will be considered. Brief and practical suggestions will be given in reference to the care of the child's health, and the preservation of the teeth.

The utility and beautifying influence of the teeth depending very much on their position, great attention should be paid to the permanent set to insure regularity, beauty, and firmness of arch. This will form the subject of a distinct chapter.

As a healthy state of the gums and lining membrane of the mouth is essential to the preservation of the teeth, their morbid conditions, and the remedies, will be considered in place.

The concretions of the mouth, known as tartar or salivary calculus, will next receive attention, and then the principal diseases of the teeth themselves, after which a few practical hints on artificial teeth will conclude the subject.

ESSAY  
ON  
DENTAL SURGERY.

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CHAPTER I.

NUTRITION.

At birth the child possesses but the rudiments of the man. It must be fed and nourished to bring it to maturity. A great abundance of nutritive matter is required during the period of growth to develop and perfect all parts of the body. After this, a regular supply of food is required to counteract the change constantly going on in the system, by which old and worn out atoms are removed, that their places may be supplied by new particles, derived from fresh material furnished by digestion. The agency by which this supply is afforded is called the *process of nutrition*.

Nutrition, then, is that vital process by which organs and tissues are nourished and developed, and by which they are maintained in the same general conditions of shape, size, and structure which they have obtained by development and growth. By this process, adult persons in health, preserve, for years, the same general outline of form, size, and features, though the several portions of the bodies are continually changing, particles decaying