

To the Editors:

The evidence of Mr. Keep, the dentist, has so far, an important bearing upon the case of *marquess*, which Dr. Webster is now undergoing, perhaps, the greatest ordeal and tribulation falling to the lot of any one man. It has been our desire, as it still is, to see the doctor come forward from his dreadful position, like refined gold from the furnace, with the stamp of purity certified by searching and indubitable evidence. Upon the first perusal of Dr. Keep's evidence, we (as no doubt our readers are) were disappointed. The fees and point it bore most disadvantageously against the doctor's cause. Upon reflection, however, and taking into consideration the anatomical and physiological facts constantly occurring in the human jaws, we paused and dissected this evidence. So far as regards the attention and care of the doctor in the preparation of the models, &c., for Dr. Parkman's mouth, there exhibits nothing extraordinary in this. Every dentist is compelled to make a correct model, or his workmanship will be useless, as would imperfect work unfit the masonry for the perfection of the architectural arch. It must be borne in mind that the impression of Dr. Parkman's mouth, (as in other dental cases,) were made to represent his mouth in its vivid, living state; the gums and flesh full of circulating blood and other fluids. This flesh always being of uncertain thickness upon the bones, and varying in different mouths, as muscles and fat do on the limbs of different persons—hence the difference to be found in various mouths. In a majority of cases, the flesh upon the jaws is the cause of the peculiarity of the mouth. It is no more possible to identify artificial or even natural teeth, (if free from their sockets,) in the skeleton—and that in a worst state, too—than it would be possible to identify the fitting of a boot, placed on the skeleton of the foot and leg—or identifying a garment, (which had been destroyed,) by the buttons. Dr. Keep says, "the most perfect portion that remained, was that belonging to the left side of the lower jaw. I recognized the shape of the outline as being the same that I had labored on so long." This is a bold statement. Yet without any desire to comment severely upon such a statement, we unhesitatingly say it is a bold statement. Dr. Mott, one of the most thorough anatomists on the earth, would not—could not make such a statement, that the bone beneath can be recognized from the covering flesh. The doctor, selecting the teeth from their confusion, and placing them in their relative positions with regard to each other, may strike the uninitiated in anatomical certainties, but will excite little wonder in the minds of the anatomist or the dentist. If, after thirty years' practice, he did not know where to place the front incisor teeth, in contradistinction to the molar teeth, he must be ignorant indeed. Now we will suppose all the teeth placed in their proper position. We find them burnt and broken—the gold plate upon which they were set melted from them—which gold plate is the part fitted to the gums, upon the jaw bones. The teeth are made to fit upon and to the gold plate—and yet Dr. Keep identifies these teeth as "resembling" the "burnt skeleton of the jaw. The teeth might have been made peculiar. Dr. Keep's idea of "peculiarity" in this case, appears to be as he says. "The circumstances connected with these two models, were somewhat peculiar. The first question asked me by Dr. Parkman, was, 'how long will it take to make them?'" Now this question has as great a bearing upon the peculiarity of Dr. Parkman's jaws, as the question put to a butcher, "how long will it be before you send the marketing home." The grinding of the teeth down to make them fit, may have offered some mark for their identification, and even here the evidence is at fault, because the same thing occurs in every dentist's practice, and the part which appears upon the mould and in the hand most perfect, often is the least so in the mouth, and the dentist has to grind the parts to fit, as the teeth meet in apposition. Now, fitting the teeth, no matter what may be the peculiar conformation of the jaws, they meet and bite in the same varieties and rule, as boots wear upon the feet—some lacing off the heel, some wearing them on the centre of the soles, &c., &c. So the teeth either are worn off their sides or angles, or are worn down to flat grinding-surfaces, that the dentist is compelled to follow out the same mode to assimilate the artificial substitutes, to the nature of the parts in the several individuals, thus reducing this portion of the dental mechanism to a certain rule in accordance with the laws of nature. It therefore follows, that dental practice is similar in every dental laboratory in all its applications, the difference only, as in portrait painting, being in skill.

Another important bearing upon this evidence, is the fact, that in no portion of the body are the changes perceptible to such an extent as they are in the human jaw. They commence at birth and end with death. After a tooth is extracted the gum heals; and if an artificial tooth were now made, in a few days the gum will have receded from the gold plate, and in a few months this portion of the jaw would be entirely removed by absorption. If all the teeth are gone, and no stumps remaining, the sockets of the teeth, and the portion of the jaw bones to which nature has affixed them, being of no further use to the animal economy, nature acts about her work for their removal, and calls into requisition for this purpose, a system known as the *absorbents*, so that, with the flesh, the socket and portion of the jaw bones, there is removed from each jaw from one to one and a half inches in depth of their substance. Even when absorption is apparently completed, a set of artificial teeth, by their pressure, will excite the absorbents to a powerful action, and hence constant changes and alterations have to be made in artificial teeth, to render them fitted to the altered state of the jaw bones.

We will conclude this article by an anecdote related by Napoleon of Sir Hudson Lowe. For some purpose it was necessary to deceive the British in Italy. A schoolmaster was procured, who wrote a dispatch, (suitable to the French intrigues,) purporting to emanate and as coming from Sir Hudson Lowe. The dispatch of course was intercepted, and the point desired by the French was gained thereby. When the dispatch was shown to Sir Hudson Lowe, and English perfidy and treachery enlarged upon, he stood against. The writing, the signature, the 'g's, the f's, the h's, all were in his own hand-writing. He acknowledges having written the dispatch, although he said, he had not the slightest remembrance, how or why he should have done so, in opposition to his own sense of propriety, and interests of his own country. The unthinking reader may say that a set of teeth is more recognizable than a hand-writing.

Somebody in California has

To the Hon. ^{the} Philip Merrill

Sir
I again take the liberty of addressing you - Be so kind as read the accompanying article. It will urge you for the trouble and give you some valuable hints

In addition to the article - Bear the following in mind

Mr. Keep says, that the teeth he swears ~~to~~ ^{to} identify, did not crack or explode because they were muffled in the jaws and flesh of the head & face -

There are numerous kinds and qualities of teeth. Some so frail that the application of heat will break them all to pieces - Some so porous that the expansion of the moisture explodes them - Some so dense that fire may be applied scores of times without injury to the teeth. Mr. Keep says his kind was of the explosive kind -

I would add that the Saliva and juices of the Stomach - and fluids of the System have a peculiar chemical effect upon ~~the~~ Mineral teeth. Such as Mr. Keep describes, their teeth to be - that these fluids cause them when heated to flake in pieces - break - fly - crack - explode &c &c -

Excuse me troubling you all & wish to see - in plain sailing and fair play.

Very Resp

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