

Chapter 18

Reprinted

From

MAN VERSUS TOOTHACHE

by

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CHAPTER 18

A STATE OFFICIAL LENDS ME AN EAR

In spite of all the discouragement I had met with, I kept on investigating and piling up evidence which bore out my theory. At last I got a break.

Dr. Edward Taylor, director of dental health for the Texas State Board of Health, had come up from Austin for our district convention at Amarillo (January, 1939).

When I found Dr. Taylor disengaged for a minute or so, I called him aside and told him briefly what I had found out about the Deaf Smith County people's seemingly immunity to tooth decay.

"Believe it or not, Dr. Taylor, there are men and women in the Hereford country where I practice who live into middle age and even older without a single decayed spot on their teeth. I have tried for years to tell my fellow dentists here at the convention about my discovery; but they just laugh at me. None will believe me and up to now, not a single one has accepted my standing invitation to come to Hereford and let me show them. This same phenomenon existed in their own practice, but without a comparison the truth is not seen.

"Finally, I decided it was no use trying to sell my ideas to my fellow practitioners. I determined to keep my own counsel and keep on investigating. The more facts I uncovered, the more firmly I was convinced that I was on the right track.

"Doctor, we have something down there—and I believe it comes out of our mineralized soil—that builds immunity to tooth decay. That is my theory and there is proof of it right in the people's mouths. I do not ask you to take my word for it, Dr. Taylor. Come to Hereford and see for yourself."

Though Dr. Taylor had listened to me patiently and seemed interested, he did not commit himself at the time. I thought that would be the last of the matter. But about six months later, a letter came from Dr. Taylor: "Would it be all right for me to come

up and see you—say, one day next week?" he inquired. "Sure," I answered, "come right ahead."

When Dr. Taylor arrived, I called the city superintendent of schools by telephone: "Dr. Edward Taylor, with the State Board of Health at Austin, has come up for a dental survey. The Doctor wants to visit the homes of typical Hereford families and inspect their teeth. He wants the families picked just at random. Could you get one of your teachers to show Dr. Taylor around and introduce him?"

The superintendent said that could be arranged. Of course, Dr. Taylor's guide knew nothing of the survey objective and nothing of dental conditions in the families to be visited.

During his stay in Hereford and vicinity, Dr. Taylor looked at the mouths of 56 persons. Forty-three were native-born and had lived in Deaf Smith County all their lives. All those life-long residents had not a single decayed tooth. The greater number had never had a toothache in their lives.

"Dr. Heard, this thing is simply incredible," Dr. Taylor said when he had finished. "I am going to do something about it."

So when the public schools opened the following September (1939), Dr. Taylor sent a public health dentist to give all his time to the study of the Hereford pupils' teeth. There were 810 children, ages 6 to 18 years, enrolled that year. The survey ran through two full years.

In his bulletin, "Factors in Caries Immunity in the Deaf Smith County Area," Dr. Taylor sums up the survey findings; Out of 289 children, age 6 to 18 years, who had always lived in Deaf Smith County, only 111 (38.4 per cent) showed tooth decay—averaging only 1.29 decayed spots per child.

The public health dentist had found only half as much tooth decay as Drs. Dean and Jay had found in Galesburg, Ill. Until then, Galesburg had shown the lowest tooth decay rate among school children of any city in the United States.

Like Hereford, Galesburg has fluorine in its drinking water. Its 1.9 p.p.m. compares with Deaf Smith County's 2.2 p.p.m.

For comparison Dr. Taylor carried out dental surveys in two Texas towns that had no fluorine in their water and other areas

with varying amounts of fluorine. Abilene's school children showed 4.04 and Tyler's showed 6 decayed spots each.

Beginning at Tyler, the report concludes, "the tooth decay rate drops as we approach Hereford geographically."

DR. HEARD'S PHILOSOPHY

The popular foods served today are disease creating.

The diseases which attack us are of our own creation.

Man has the power of choice. Whatever he has, he has chosen.

Any town can be a town without a toothache if the people choose it.

The business of man is to rule and to choose. Whatever is with us we have chosen—"Believe it or not".

CHAPTER 2.

I STRIKE OUT ON MY WAY

When I was 19, going on 20 years old, I suddenly decided to visit my brother Fayette, who lived at Baleyton, Cullman County, about 100 miles north of the old home farm. For some years I had nursed the urge to better myself. Now I had got the idea into my head that my oldest brother, who had a family and a farm of his own could help me get a start. Anyhow, I could stay at his house until I had found myself a job.

It was before daylight on January 2, 1887, that I left home to catch the train at Talladega. A younger brother hauled me to the railroad depot, 25-miles away, in a two-wheel cart. As I sat in the waiting room, I heard a telephone ring for the first time in my life. Fascinated, I watched the station agent talk into a box on the wall: "Number 10, going north, on time."

For my first journey out into the world, I had only the fourteen dollars that my cotton patch had brought me. But when he came to tell me goodbye, my father slipped a five-dollar bill into my hand. Then my mother came and said to me: "George, I want to hear from you, but I want always to hear good news." I have never to this day forgotten or lost sight of those words. As long as she lived I kept one purpose in mind: to make my life yield good news for my mother.

So I left home in the winter dawn, wearing the tight-fitting coat and britches mother had made for me of homespun jeans. I wore heavy brogan shoes, their soles covered solid with big-headed tacks. I lugged a heavy cardboard satchel that held all my belongings. I had never in my life rode a train before. The cars seemed just to glide along as if I were riding on air. All that day I watched the country roll past the car window, brown fields, grazing cattle and farm cabins, but mostly pine woods. It was 2 o'clock in the morning when the train got to Cullman. I found a hotel room for twenty-five cents. The next morning about sun up a livery stableman came around. "Where do you want to go, sonny?" he asked me. "How much would you charge to take me to

Fayette Heard's house eighteen miles from here on the road to Baleyton?"

"That would cost you a dollar and a half."

"I believe I could walk the 18-miles in a day," I told him. "The dollar and a half would be good wages for me."

So I had my breakfast and struck out on the big road to Baleyton, lugging my bag. After 60 odd years, that 18 mile walk on a January day seems about as hard a day's work as I have ever done. I followed the narrow winding white sandy and mostly level wagon road across hollows and mostly through wild country where scraggy blackjack and post oak with tall pines grew. All day long I met up with just one fellow traveler by the name of Andy Cash. I sat down by the road to eat the cheese and crackers I had bought for lunch. I had never tasted cheese and crackers before. To a tired and hungry boy they were like food for a king. As I sat there a man rode up on a black mule, headed toward Cullman.

"Where are you going, young feller?" he asked me.

"I'm on my way to Fayette Heard's house," I told him. "He's my brother." "Why, I know Fayette Heard. He's my neighbor. You have a good long piece to walk yet, sonny."

I trudged on with my satchel getting heavier all the time. It had been dark a long time before I reached Brother Fayette's house. A few days later that same mule rider, came over and hired me for \$10 a month and board. My new job was to help around the grist mill, cotton gin and saw mill. Between times I would do general farm work. My day began at 4 o'clock in the morning. I had to chop wood and draw water to keep the boiler going till dark. At 8 o'clock I would shut down the mill and trudge home to supper dead tired. But that tough schedule lasted only till the ginning was done. Mostly on the farm my work was lighter, but there were days all through the year when we would run the mill to saw lumber or grind corn.