# THE ORTHODONTIC VALUE OF RESEARCH AND OBSERVATIONS IN DEVELOPMENTAL GROWTH OF THE FACE

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Excerpted from the Angle Orthodontist, April, 1931

There is a hymn in the old Methodist Hymn book of which the first four lines are the following:

> Ah, lovely appearance of death.
> What sight upon earth is so fair.
> Not all the gay pageants that breathe
> Can with a dead body compare.

One might almost call this the Anatomists' Carol. It certainly typifies the undoing of Anatomy. The spirit which could magnify the significance of the dead, blinded itself to the ideals for which Anatomical study could alone be worth while, namely the comprehension of development, growth and repair in the living. Recent years have seen the break-down of traditional dead-house Anatomy with its fixed and narrow ideas, and substitution therefor of the ideal comprehensive Anatomy of the clinic.

A very forceful instance of this new vision in anatomical study is given by the work prosecuted in the main by the Orthodontists, namely developmental growth of the face. We are so accustomed to think of exact details of facial form and even of the occlusal pattern of the dentition as being determined by heredity that we know practically nothing of the environmental effects upon facial form and all too little of their influence upon occlusal pattern. Nevertheless our faith is justly strong in our power to modify both these characters by suitable treatment. What we can do, Nature undoubtedly is doing and there is just the possibility that we may, in our eagerness, confuse Nature's handiwork with our own.

*A dead child is a defective child* in whom there has occurred an interruption or a prohibition of developmental growth for some time before death, unless, of course death is due to an acute disease or to accident. The interpretive study of actual skulls must be tempered by recognition of this fact. If we are to investigate healthy skulls we must do it on the living.