

PREFACE.

THERE are already so many text-books that the question might be asked, "Why another?" My reply gives my excuse for my intrusion. Without designing to criticise the methods of other writers, I would yet call attention to the fact that many have given us works which are largely compilations. These authors have seemed loath to leave anything unsaid which is pertinent to their subjects. In their efforts to be fully comprehensive they have quoted freely from others, giving pros and cons by men of equal authority, till the student who is a beginner is bewildered in his effort to choose. To avoid this, I decided to describe in my book only such methods as I have myself tested, believing that the student will be more benefited by adopting a single successful mode of practice than by essaying the various methods of many men.

This has involved a two-fold result. First, and most important, the teaching becomes dogmatic.

The charge has been freely made that "writers are not skillful dentists." This is because theory and practice are so often at variance. I have endeavored to write a work which would be as practical as words could make it. There is not a case described that has not occurred in my practice. There is not a method advocated that I have not tested.

The second result is that I do not give detailed directions for carrying out methods which I have not attempted. This of course makes the book incomplete from that standpoint; but I prefer this to being quoted as authority for that which I have not myself tested, as too many have been already. As an example of such omission, it will be observed that I do not describe methods of using non-cohesive gold foil. I can only say in defense that I have never used non-cohesive foil, and let that excuse my not treating of it. I will reiterate, however, what I say in the body of the book, that I have never seen any

need of it, nor found any man who could prove its necessity. I do not think my patients have suffered because of my lack of knowledge in this direction.

Because of the fact that my work first appeared in serial in the *Dental Cosmos*, I am enabled here to reply to one or two criticisms which have been printed in society reports. One gentleman quotes me as advocating a broad contact-point in approximal fillings. In this, if he was correctly reported, he has misrepresented me. My advocacy of such a contact is in connection with a specified condition only, and the position which I take is one which I am ready to defend clinically or otherwise at any time. This would be an inappropriate place to discuss it.

Another gentleman is reported to have said that I advise students to have as few instruments as possible, and that I myself fill teeth with a broken instrument. The first statement is accurate. I think that a man beginning the practice of dentistry should not purchase many instruments until he has had the experience which will lead him toward a wise choice of such an assortment as will best suit his individual peculiarities and requirements. The second statement is inaccurate. I simply say that a good filling may be inserted with a broken instrument. The point here was in reference to whether the point of a plugger should be serrated or smooth. A broken point is neither the one nor the other, yet may be a good point. While it is not my practice to fill teeth with a broken instrument, as suggested, I could easily demonstrate that as good a filling can be inserted in that way as with the best new plugger. Again I say it is the man, not the tool.

Let me say here, as I have said in the body of this work, I do not make any broad claims for originality in connection with the methods described. If there is any originality at all, it is in the method of teaching, rather than in the thing taught. To offer the profession, and especially those just entering it, a work advocating methods entirely my own would be to ask the adoption of modes of practice not in common use, and therefore not sufficiently well tested.

I have no sympathy with those who are constantly crying out, "That is my method; I invented it." The chief interest to the student must always be in a thorough knowledge of the method itself, rather than in the name of its originator.

To those, therefore, who will find a description of their original methods in my book I have only to say, "Gentlemen, I thank you for what you have taught to me, and am now in turn trying to teach it to others." I wish also to extend my heartiest gratitude to the hundred or more dentists of this country and Europe who, though strangers to me, have written me kindly letters of approval during the progress of this work. Many times have such letters proved a solace to me when hand and brain were tired, and so have been an incentive to continue. I thank them.

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