

CONCLUSION TO THIRD EDITION.

TEN years have passed since it was permitted that I should publish the results of a life-work devoted to Plastic Dentistry.

In the nature of things this work was largely done from an *empirical* standpoint, and therefore from under a professional clouding.

The course of events gave to dentistry the Palmer theory of the "compatibility" or "incompatibility" of filling material with toothbone, and thus afforded a *scientific basis* upon which to found a practice which had already been proven eminently satisfactory.

This union of Theory and Practice gave birth to an organization called "The New Departure Corps," composed of Prof. Henry Morton and Prof. M. B. Snyder, scientists; Messrs. Jacob B. Eckfeldt and Patterson Du Bois, assayers of the Philadelphia Mint, metallurgists; and Drs. S. B. Palmer, Henry S. Chase and J. Foster Flagg, dentists.

The work of this organization, in turn, gave to our profession a "creed," of which, as opposed to the prevailing views, the *Dental Cosmos* said, editorially: "Both theory and practice are so essentially, so radically, so diametrically in opposition to the theory and practice which have so generally obtained, that it is quite permissible to designate them by way of distinction as the 'accepted' creed and the 'new departure' creed."

Upon this "New Departure Creed" rests the whole teaching—theoretic, practical, experimental and manipulative—of this work upon "Plastics and Plastic Filling."

Recognizing that the influence which has thus been exerted upon the practice of dentistry is indisputable, and that the old-time methods and means have been graphically and truthfully spoken of as "broken!" it seems that I could not better conclude this effort than by republishing the creed as given in 1877, and supplementing it with an appeal for its careful scrutiny and studious consideration.

THE NEW DEPARTURE CREED.

- I. In proportion as teeth *need* saving, gold is the *worst* material to use.
- II. Neither "contouring filling" nor "separating teeth" has much to do with the arrest of decay.
- III. Failure in operations is mainly due to incompatibility of filling material with toothbone.
- IV. A tooth that can be so treated as to be satisfactorily filled with *anything* is worth filling.
- V. Skillful and scrupulous dentists fill with tin covered with gold, *thereby* preventing decay, pulpitis, death of the pulp, and abscess, and *thereby saving the tooth*.*
- VI. A filling may be the *best known* for the tooth and yet *leak badly*.
- VII. Gutta-percha *properly used* is the *most permanent* filling material we possess.
- VIII. A *poor* gutta-percha filling in *its proper place* is better than a *good* gold one.
- IX. Amalgam *per se* is an *excellent* filling material.
- X. The use of "plastic" filling materials tends to lower that dentistry which has for its standard of excellence "ability to make gold fillings," but very much extends the sphere of usefulness of that dentistry which has for its standard of excellence "ability to save teeth."

Frequent erroneous quotation, persistent misrepresentation, and innocent and ignorant misinterpretation of the *spirit* of this creed have failed in preventing its constant presentation, its unwavering advocacy and its persistent practical demonstration, and to these must be ascribed its gradually growing acceptance and the inevitable marked change in the work of operative dentistry.

My many years of practice, my long and carefully tabulated series of observations upon dental work, and my close connection with both gold and plastic efforts for the saving of teeth, have led me to the conviction that *the high style, scientific use of plastics is the culmination of dental effort*, and that while the use of *gold* for the filling of easy accessible places in good, strong teeth stamps it as the *king of all filling materials*, because its results, where it is indicated, are *everything* that could be desired, it nevertheless remains true that every *real necessity* in the whole range of dental trouble is *best* met with plastics, and

* This article was introduced in the creed because it was *textual authority*, at that time, that "unskillful and unscrupulous dentists fill with tin covered with gold, *thereby* causing galvanic action, pulpitis, death of the pulp, abscess, and *loss of the tooth*."

that this is shown in every case in just proportion with the *knowledge* which the operator possesses in regard to "plastic work."

For this reason it seems to me that this work is fast taking not only a prominent position in dental science, but that it is rapidly gaining for itself a *position of first importance*.

To-day the educated plastic filler can do, *in large proportion*, everything that the gold filler can do; and to-day the gold filler can do only a very small proportion of all that the plastic filler can do.

The broad work of our profession goes on: in mechanics, in ceramics, in surgery, in pathology, in therapeutics, the strides are such as to require, *absolutely*, a superhuman effort to keep abreast of all! And yet with all this, I feel to urge that *the work of the near future, the work for those in the early prime of practice, and especially for those now about entering upon practice*, is most largely found in the study and development of "Plastics."

It must be known and recognized that but few indeed of this later generation had other than a most superficial knowledge of this subject.

It must be recognized that those who have most loudly decried both methods and materials pertaining to *Plastic Dentistry* knew practically *nothing* of either; that their efforts at utilizing them, from the selection of the different materials to their preparation and introduction, were amusing and amazing in the extreme; that the reports of Society meetings, with the remarks of the "eminent" (as they are called), show palpably an *eminent* ignorance which it is difficult to imagine possible; and that it is only those who, forming the anomalous "rear-guard" of the past and "advance-guard" of the future, have deemed it worth their while to inform themselves, in some wise creditably, upon this subject.

It should further be known, that even of those most proficient in this regard among the active workers, few have any more than what might justly be called superficial education as relates to plastic materials and plastic work.

Few are able to discriminate between *very good* and *very poor* materials, until they have *bought* and *tried them* in the very

expensive way of testing them *in the mouth*, doing hundreds of dollars' worth of work with materials which by the initiated would be at once discarded as worthless, and doing this by methods which would as readily be known as futile.

Few know of the components, to say nothing of their proportions, of which are made the plastic materials they daily use; fewer yet know anything of the various methods of manufacture, and thus are easily deceived by every foolish claim of every unprincipled advertiser.

Few know how to use good plastics to good advantage, and very, very few, as yet, know how to use them in the best known way. This is demonstrated at every Society meeting where this work is tried. Scores are willing *and anxious* to show their skill with foil, but few are they who *dare* to show their skill with plastics?

And is this because there is no *skill* required? Is it because there is no *knowledge* to be demonstrated? Let each one ask himself if he believes that it is so.

And yet the last resort in every case before extraction is plastics.

Why is this? Is it that by some mysterious power, no matter how used, no matter against what odds, no matter how grave the emergency, no matter how hopeless the effort, that *plastics* are yet *worth trying*?

After everything else had failed, would even the best and grandest of all the manipulators *try gold*?

Then why is it that, after the *best* manipulators have failed with gold, the ordinary manipulators *try plastics*?

The answer to this is given in few words, but those few words are worthy of *most serious, earnest thought*. *It is because, in many instances, the latter have succeeded where the former have failed.*

Had the latter failed time after time, and more, had they failed *universally*, is it reasonable to suppose that such work would steadily *and increasingly* go on?

And, on the other hand, if the efforts with plastics in such cases were *ever* successful, would it not be a subject for deep thought and thorough investigation?

How much more, then, should careful attention be given to the fact that *such* efforts succeed in *many* cases.

And finally, if such efforts succeed in many cases, what study is more imperative for coming men than that of thorough preparation for the *proper* use of those methods and materials which, imperfectly used, are capable of doing so much good?

Like every other study, that of "Plastics" opens wider with every forward step. Its breadth and depth are no more realized in dentistry than are the wonders of mineralogy by those who crack the stone ballast for our railways!

It is because of this belief, and because of the possibilities I recognize as the result of all these years of labor, experiment and observation, that I now thus present this subject; that I urge the fact that "Plastics," as I have said, *are rapidly gaining for themselves a position of first importance*; that upon knowledge of this subject will largely depend the capability of the dentists of the next generation—the *generation now upon us*—to cope with conditions they will have to care for; that upon knowledge of this subject will largely depend the position which each one will hold among his professional brethren and in the community in which he lives, *and that upon knowledge of this subject will largely depend the ABUNDANCE of relief from suffering and maintenance of health and comfort which dentists will be enabled to bestow upon their fellow-men.*