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IN DENTAL

PRACTICE

RECAP

Whereas, The Class of 1927 of the School of Dental and Oral Surgery of Columbia University

motivated to show its appreciation of the high professional ideals and directorial ability of

Frank T. Van Woert, M.D.S.

has in unanimous accord

Resolved,

to present a set of books to the library of the school, inscribed to its director;

Resolved,

to further acknowledge its esteem, loyalty, and respect by engrossing and presenting these resolutions to him.

Signed, January 6, 1927.

The Class of 1927.

President.

Louis Citron - White Plains N.Y.

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SUCCESS
IN
DENTAL PRACTICE

A Few Suggestions Relative to the Most Approved Methods of Conducting a Practice

BY

C. N. JOHNSON, M.A., L.D.S., D.D.S.

PROFESSOR OF OPERATIVE DENTISTRY IN THE CHICAGO COLLEGE OF DENTAL SURGERY; EDITOR OF THE *Dental Review*, AND AUTHOR OF "PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF FILLING TEETH," "TEXT-BOOK OF OPERATIVE DENTISTRY," ETC.

SECOND EDITION

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Preface to the First Edition.

THE charge has frequently been made that dentists as a class are seriously at fault with regard to the methods employed in the business management of their affairs. Probably it would be more exact to say that the real charge is that they have no method. But whether this be entirely true or not, the fact still remains that there are few dentists whose affairs are so conducted that they may not be greatly improved by the application of good business methods.

When business methods are mentioned in this connection it is not to be inferred that a dental practice should ever in any wise be so conducted that the commercial element is allowed to predominate over the professional. Commercialism is a serious menace to any profession; but there is a vast distinction between an offensive commercialism and that methodical conduct of affairs which results in a successful practice and

a financial balance on the right side of the ledger at the end of each year. No man is doing his full duty to himself, to his profession, or to those dependent upon him who completely ignores this phase of his professional life, as some practitioners seem to do, and it should no longer be considered any discredit to a dentist to devote part of his talents to the accumulation of a competence.

The suggestions in this book are naturally intended for the most part to apply to the younger members of the profession, though it is confidently believed that even those long in practice may derive benefit from a study of the plans laid down. It is not expected that practitioners firmly settled in their ways will revolutionize their methods in accordance with the suggestions herein contained; and yet a consideration of the question cannot fail to be of advantage to any man, even of the most extended experience.

The book is not offered as a panacea for all the ills which harass a dentist in the conduct of his practice, but merely with the hope that it may prove of some small service in attempting to establish an equitable and intelligent relation-

ship between the practitioner and the public. If this is accomplished it will make the work of the dentist more pleasant and assuredly more profitable.

C. N. J.

Preface to the Second Edition.

When this book was first issued it was hardly expected that it would run into another edition. It was intended for the most part for the younger men in the profession and the basis of it was a series of lectures on the subject delivered to senior students in college. If it served a temporary purpose for a limited number the author was content. But the interest in the work has extended more widely than was anticipated, and the consequence is the call for a second edition. In bringing this out some revision has been made, and it is hoped that the book has been improved.

Since the first appearance of the book a wave of interest in business methods has swept over the profession. Much space in dental periodicals has been devoted to the "business side of dentistry" and many articles have appeared from time to time. Some of the advice given has been good and helpful, while some has

been very ill-advised and even harmful. To constantly magnify the business of dentistry at the expense of the professional spirit which should be the chief mainspring of every man's motive who conducts a practice is to degrade dentistry and make it a by-word in the land. We need better methods of business, but we do not necessarily thereby have to sacrifice the higher ethics of professional life. The well-rounded man is the one who combines sane business methods with the purest essence of professionalism, and it is in the attempt to make suggestions toward this end among those who are coming into the profession that the present volume is dedicated. C. N. J.

May, 1913.

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Success in Practice

I

THE ARRANGEMENT OF AN OFFICE

The Reception-Room. — The economy of space, particularly in localities where rents are high, is an important factor in the arrangement of an office. If the practice is conducted in a methodical and systematic manner, and the work is done by appointment, as it should be, there is little need for a large reception-room. Under these circumstances it is unusual for many people to be in this room at one time, or for any one to remain there long. And yet those who are there should be pleasantly entertained by a diversity of reading-matter on the centre-table. The selection of this matter requires some judgment, in view of the difference in tastes among patients. It should run the gamut in periodicals from short, crisp story-books to the heavier and pro-

founder magazines. It is almost unnecessary to say that flashy literature of any kind has no place in a dental office. Old, back-numbered, and dog-eared magazines should be rigidly discarded, unless perchance some such magazine may contain a very able article which has strongly appealed to the dentist, or has a suggestive bearing on contemporaneous thought. Such an article should be heavily underlined on the title-page and the article itself red-pencilled to call attention to it. The ordinary dental journals are out of place in the reception-room, on the ground that everything which smacks of the shop should be excluded from this part of the office.

A reception-room should be cheerful and inviting, with an air of comfort and culture about it. If the dentist himself is lacking in the requisite taste to fit it up in this way, he would better consult some one who has the taste,—preferably a lady,—best of all his wife.

The Operating-Room.—In view of the fact that the dentist spends most of his working hours in this room, it is important that he gives the closest attention to its arrangement. It

should be well ventilated at all times, and if possible should admit the sunlight. A good arrangement is to have two windows, one facing the south, to allow the sun free admission during the winter months, and the other, preferably an east light, for operating. A corner room facing the southeast seems in many respects the most desirable arrangement. In summer the sun is so high that its rays do not enter the south window in mid-day to any uncomfortable extent, but flood the east window early in the morning and move around out of range by the time operating begins. In winter the south window admits the sunlight to the room at the operator's back through most of the operating hours, which at this time of the year particularly is a matter of great importance so far as the dentist's health is concerned.

The problem of light is a very important one, both as it relates to effective work and to the preservation of the operator's eyes. This matter is too often overlooked by dentists, either through thoughtlessness or a failure to understand the real requisites of an operating light. The impression seems to prevail that the more

light in the room the better, while the fact is that too much light is altogether disastrous. The only light needed for operating is that which shines directly into the patient's mouth, and therefore the area of the operating window need not be large. A window three or four feet wide is ample, and it should be situated well up towards the ceiling. The idea is to concentrate the light as much as possible at one point,—viz., in the vicinity of the head-rest of the chair. Of course, allowances must be made for raising and lowering the chair, but any extra rays of light other than those in actual use in lighting the patient's mouth are a positive detriment. A bright flooding of the room in the region towards which the operator faces is a serious tax on his eyes and will sooner or later ruin them. An element of particular danger lies in reflected light being thrown up in his face while operating, and in this respect few operators are sufficiently alive to their best interests. The color of the wall-paper or tinting is seldom considered except with the idea of having a pleasing shade, and these shades are usually selected in bright colors. Nothing could be worse for an oper-

ating-room. All bright colors reflect the light, and the operator who daily faces such a wall is unconsciously subjecting himself to eye-strain which must eventually impair his vision. This matter has been sufficiently tested in a practical way to leave no doubt of its importance, and the suggestion is hereby strongly urged for operators to tint the walls of their operating-rooms in some of the neutral shades which absorb the light instead of reflecting it back in the operator's eyes. A color which has proved for years a most satisfactory one and which is not in any way sombre in effect is a soft chocolate. There is a sense of restfulness to the eyes in an operating-room tinted in this shade which in the course of years becomes a really important factor in the comfort of daily work.

The sunlight which streams in at the operator's back from the south window in winter is no tax on the eyesight, because the operator does not face it, and with a wall tinted as just indicated there is no glare, even when the light does strike it.

Consultation- and Dressing-Room. — Where economy of space is important, these two rooms

may be combined in one. It is necessary in a busy practice to have some small room convenient to the operating-room where brief examinations may be made or emergency cases treated without disturbing the patient in the chair. As a rule it should be the aim of the operator to avoid leaving a patient during an operation, but emergencies occasionally arise which insist on immediate attention and where a few moments will suffice to adjust any passing trouble and leave the dentist free to complete his operation unmolested. The fact of some one waiting in the reception-room to see him is always more or less of a distraction to an operator, and a convenient consultation-room will often relieve him of this annoyance. This same room may be used as a dressing-room, the operator having no use for it while changing patients.

The Laboratory.—This room is too often a disgrace to a professional man in being made the dumping-ground for all the rubbish of the office and in the amount of dirt and dust that is allowed to accumulate in it. The opinion which seems to prevail among practitioners that the laboratory must of necessity be more or less

untidy on account of the work which is performed therein is erroneous. It may be kept presentable at all times, and may even be made attractive, if the practitioner takes sufficient pride to keep it so. It is merely a question of devising a ready means of getting rid of the refuse as fast as it accumulates and not allowing old plaster or other evil-smelling products to lie around in sight. A little systematic tidiness in the laboratory will well repay any dentist who takes the least pride in the general appearance of his office, and if managed in the proper manner it will not consume an appreciable amount of time.

II

WINNING PATRONAGE

Advertising.—After an office is fitted up, the next consideration is to secure patients. This is a problem which has taxed the minds of very many in the profession, and yet it is really a simple matter if approached in the right way. The most fatal mistake a young man can make is to attempt to gain a practice by newspaper advertising. This statement is made in the present connection entirely aside from any consideration of the ethical phase of the question. Even if it were perfectly ethical to resort to circulars, or hand-bills, or posters, or display advertisements in the public prints, it would still remain a bad business policy in a profession like dentistry. While there are always exceptions to every rule, the generality of patients who come to a dentist as the result of this kind of advertising are not of the class which make good patronage for any self-respecting young man.

Even if newspaper advertising *per se* were in no wise objectionable, the depths to which it has been dragged by irresponsible impostors would tend to brand it as a doubtful expedient for honest men to traffic with. The stigma of the "dental parlor" is a shadow which no young man can afford to have trailing after him through life. Unless there be present in the individual himself those qualities which draw and hold people to him by the force of his own personality, newspaper advertising will prove at best only a temporary advantage to be immediately lost the moment the advertising ceases; while if the young man possesses those qualities, he assuredly has no need of the newspaper to aid him. Few young men start out with the idea of continuing throughout their entire professional life the habit of paying part of their income to the newspapers for the purpose of bringing in patronage. Their plan usually is to utilize this means for a time till they are well established, and then they fondly hope to be independent of such methods and able to pilot their own bark. The fallacy of this has been demonstrated repeatedly. It is the rarest possible ex-

ception to find any young man who has resorted to this kind of advertising ever to attain to any prominence in the profession, or to succeed permanently in a financial way. Even laying aside the question of respect on the part of professional associates, the history of professional men generally will amply prove that there is no tangible or lasting success to be had by this plan. But granted that there were, this question of respect cannot be laid aside. Men may talk loftily and loudly about not caring what the profession thinks of them so long as they make the money, but sooner or later, money or no money, there comes to the heart of every man an overwhelming desire to be thought well of by his fellows. He may hide it for a time behind the mask of an artificial complacency, but it will not down. It is human nature. If there is a man who is devoid of this desire, he is far more to be pitied than envied or emulated, and in that man there is not the element of true happiness.

To build up a practice by newspaper advertising is to establish it on the most insecure foundation. There are two ways of attracting people to a dental office, one by advertising, which

appeals for the most part to individuals who are looking for cheap work and who usually make undesirable patients, and the other through the recommendation of those who have already received service from the dentist and are sufficiently impressed with his ability to refer other people to him. In the first instance the relationship is based on the desire to economize in money. Such people are constantly drifting hither and thither and there is no stability in this kind of practice. In order to maintain a practice by advertising it is necessary to keep up the advertising. This is a recognized principle in all advertising business—the moment the advertising stops the business stops. If a man has the qualities of mind and heart and the ability to render good service he may possibly hold some of those who come to him through public advertising, but if he has these qualities he does not need the advertising. It is true that in some way he must secure patients before they can send him others, and this matter is considered in the chapter on "Extending acquaintance." It is safe to say that whenever an individual goes to a dentist as the result of an

advertisement there is always a mental reservation in the act.

The inner history of every man who has followed quack methods for building up a practice will disclose the fact that there is something fundamentally wrong with the method. A man who always remains a quack eventually fails in the respect of his fellow-men as well as his fellow-practitioners, and he who starts out as a quack with the ultimate intention of reforming and becoming ethical as soon as his practice is established will find that the stigma of his early methods will cling to him long after he has discarded them, and will crop out and embarrass him throughout his entire professional career.

Essentials to Success.—If it be true, then, that quackery is a failure as well as a wrong, by what means shall a young man draw a patronage to himself in such a way that he may be both successful and respected? I have stated that this is a simple matter, and so it is; but the requirements for carrying it out are somewhat exacting and cannot—must not—be ignored.

No single element in a man's make-up will be found all-sufficient to ensure success in dental

practice. In fact, to be a successful dentist requires a rare combination of qualities more exacting than for that of any other calling. This statement would seem formidable and discouraging were it not for the fact that these qualities are such that they can be cultivated and acquired by almost any young man of ordinary ability. There are some stations in life which to fill properly demand of a man an inherent genius in one certain direction, a genius born in him, and which, lacking this birthright, cannot be cultivated to a successful issue. A great master, whether of music, or art, or literature, cannot be made of common clay; neither can the breadth of brain necessary to make a successful President of the United States be imparted to a man by education. The solving of great problems which affect the destiny of nations or masses of people requires a mental capacity not inherited by the average man and which the average man cannot acquire by study. For such things a peculiar mental calibre is requisite which marks a man as something apart from his fellow-men and gives him a distinctive position in the world.

Of such is not the practice of dentistry, and yet I must hasten to add that in this statement I do not in any wise admit a place of minor importance for our calling so far as relates to its honor, its dignity, or its usefulness in the world. It is merely that the chief requisites for the successful practice of dentistry are such as can largely be cultivated, not of course by every chance ignoramus or sluggard, but by the hundreds of bright, energetic young men who are yearly entering its ranks.

Efficiency.—In attempting to enumerate some of these requisites the first place must unequivocally be assigned to efficiency. Unless a man be a good dentist and eminently qualified to serve his patients skilfully, he is handicapped at the very foundation; and the thing for a young man to do, if he finds himself lacking in skill in any department of his work, is to so apply himself that the deficiency is overcome and he finds himself on a level with the best. Mediocrity will not win in this age of active progress,—to-day there is little room in the profession for the "average man." People are becoming too discriminating to allow a man of meagre attain-

ments to impose on them for any length of time, and the condition no longer exists where mere glibness of tongue can compensate for lack of ability.

It may seem a vague sort of advice to tell a young man to become proficient in his work, but what is meant is this: With almost every recent graduate there are some things which seem more easy of accomplishment than others, and probably at least a few things which seem exceedingly difficult. For instance, he may find that to build a gold filling properly in a disto-occlusal cavity in a lower molar or bicuspid is a problem which taxes him to the uttermost, and of the result of which he is never certain. The thing for him to do the moment he recognizes this particular limitation is to devote his every energy to the mastery of this class of cavities. Let him seek all the light possible on the subject from the literature of the profession, and let him request the privilege of watching some skilful operator fill such a cavity. Let him study the problem from every available point of view and never rest content till his brain has conceived the best way of accomplishing the result and his fingers

have learned how to execute it. Success in life is attained only by the constant overcoming of obstacles, and unless a dentist brings this persistent determination into his daily work he need never hope to rise above mediocrity. I would much rather see in a young man the disposition to plot and dig and delve, and the patience to persevere, than to see the highest degree of brilliancy unaccompanied by seriousness of purpose or continued application.

No young man in the practice of dentistry today can afford to stop short of the greatest possible proficiency in his work. A bungling method of operating, or a seeming lack of decision as to the precise thing to do in a given case, is instantly recognized by the patient, and a mental note made of it; while a ready, sharp, and decisive line of procedure, with no hesitation or doubt, appeals at once to the patron and creates confidence. The man who approaches an operation with the conscious conviction that he is entire master of the situation, unerringly commands the co-operation of the patient and accomplishes his work under the most favorable conditions. It is this which draws people to him

and which holds them in the firm grasp of an established confidence.

Personal Habits.—Another requisite in building a practice relates to the personal habits of the dentist. The chief article in the dental faith may be written in one word,—*cleanliness;* and there is no other single word so big with possibilities as this. The operator on approaching a patient should be the very pink and essence of purity. His linen should be clean, his person irreproachable by frequent bathing, his face fresh shaven every morning, if he shaves at all, and his hands most scrupulously cared for. The finger-nails—oh, ye immaculate gods of pristine purity, how often have ye been offended by the finger-nails of dentists! There never was, there never can be, any excuse for a dentist starting to work on a patient's mouth with soiled finger-nails. No matter how many patients the operator may have in a day, he should wash his hands thoroughly and dry them carefully every time a patient takes the chair. And this should invariably be done in the presence of the patient as the very last act preceding the commencement of the operation. When a discriminating patient

sees the dentist hang up the towel from drying his hands, and go at once to his work, there is a settled sense of satisfaction on the patient's part which though often unexpressed is none the less a potent factor when it comes to recommending other people to a dentist.

There is never any precaution too great to be taken in avoiding offensiveness of whatever character connected with the personality of the dentist. His breath should be the object of especial care, and he should eschew all food materials calculated in any way to leave a taint upon it. To smoke during office hours is the great unpardonable sin, and no dentist who has any respect either for himself or for his patient will commit such a breach.

It would seem to go without saying that the teeth of the dentist, above all things else, should be given the most scrupulous care, and he who fails in this respect cannot well hope to impress his patients when he advocates such attention on their part.

The question of cleanliness must also be carried beyond the person of the dentist, and be made to include his office-fittings and instru-

ments. Everything about the chair should be kept beyond reproach, the linen well laundried and frequently changed, and the cuspidor and other metal accessories polished clean, bright, and sparkling. The slightest trace of neglect connected with the cuspidor becomes exceedingly offensive to individuals of fastidious tastes, and, even aside from sanitary conditions, such neglect is short-sighted and prejudicial. The instruments should be cleaned after each patient by scrubbing them thoroughly with a brush and soap and water previous to immersing them in an antiseptic. None of these precautions is ever lost sight of by discerning patients, and no dentist who aims to gain and maintain a good practice can afford in the least to ignore them.

Deportment towards Patients.—Another important consideration in the building of a practice relates to the deportment of the dentist towards his patients. He should at all times be absolute master of himself so far as his demeanor is concerned, and no matter how many little worries or untoward occurrences arise during the day he should never give way to impatience or ill-humor. In the very worst

dilemmas he should sustain himself by the reflection that the exigencies which arise in a dental practice are usually not of a profoundly serious matter and not ordinarily permanent in their character, so that the thing which appears like a mountain to the young man to-day may dwindle in importance to a mole-hill a week or two hence. To be a perfectly poised gentleman under every species of petty annoyance is a wonderfully strong recommendation for any man, and particularly so for a dentist. It has a compelling influence with his patients to make matters run smoothly, and develops in the office an air of quiet and restfulness which has a far-reaching effect among cultivated people. In all his professional relations he should be the essence of kindness, and if possible of tolerance. It is of course necessary at times to be very firm in his convictions, but his firmness should invariably be so tempered with a calm courtesy that his contention for the right may never seem arbitrary or offensive. Impulse, while in one way an energizing force in a young man's character, is at the same time his greatest danger. Impulse sometimes leads a young man blindly to his own

destruction; and even when it is not so serious as this, it frequently results in his embarrassment and chagrin. A good motto for the impulsive young dentist when a seeming affront has been offered him either by a patient or by his professional associates is to "think over night before retaliating." If many a man had waited till the following morning to write a letter in answer to some aggravating communication he would have immeasureably strengthened his case and saved himself subsequent humiliation.

Strive to be calm under all circumstances. The power to remain calm in the face of great provocation is one of the surest safeguards against mistake, and at once places the individual at an immense advantage over the man who blusters and fumes. For any man to habitually lose his temper is an evidence of weakness, and for a professional man like a dentist to do so is vulgar. It may sometimes be necessary and proper to stamp out a grievous wrong by an expression of righteous indignation, but any pettish display of temper is disgusting in the extreme and marks the individual who indulges in it as a man unfit to assume professional relation-

ship with cultivated people. To gain the reputation of being a perfect gentleman at all times is one of the best recommendations a dentist can have to win him a permanent patronage.

Morals.—In line with this and leading up to it is the question of morals. This book is not written in the spirit of pharisaism, and yet a consideration of success in practice cannot be altogether divorced from the fundamental subject of morality. Leaving out of the question its religious or ethical feature, it still remains a matter of the greatest importance from a purely business point of view that the dentist live an upright, moral life. Laxity in morals has a wider-reaching effect than the average young man is likely to imagine. He cannot help realizing of course that respectable people do not care to patronize a dentist who is known to be morally bad, and yet he who makes moral lapses often fondly hopes that his escapades are known only to the few associates who take part in them. There never was a greater fallacy than this, for no matter how close the bond of secrecy between such associates may be, the facts invariably leak out somehow, sometime, somewhere. Many a

young man has irretrievably lost his reputation and his practice as the result of moral delinquencies without seemingly being able to account for his failure. It is difficult to overestimate the effect of morals on daily life and practice. Even if it were possible to keep the knowledge of immorality from the public, there is irrevocably a concomitant disintegration of character which goes with an immoral life, and which sooner or later undermines a man's success. The young man in his orgies may foolishly hope to extend his acquaintance and gain patronage among those with whom he associates, but even if such people were calculated to make good patients, it is not always certain that they care to patronize a dentist who is lax in his morals. The relation of dentist to patient is of so intimate a nature that no ordinary requirements—such as those which pertain to trade—will suffice to establish confidence, and very often the people who are glad to be hail-fellow with a dentist will dispense with his professional services simply because of his hail-fellowship with them.

Professional relationship is more intimate and exacting than an ordinary business relation-

ship. A man may sell goods over a counter and his morals will not be scrutinized so closely as will those of a man who is practising a profession and who comes in closer personal contact with those who patronize him. In any walk of life moral obliquity is a handicap to the prospects of the individual, but in professional life it is peculiarly disastrous. People are becoming more discriminating in their selection of professional men. Years ago it mattered not so much if a physician or dentist was known to imbibe too freely at times, in fact it was in many instances looked upon as something of a joke. When professional men were scarce and people had little choice it was customary for them to tolerate lapses of this sort, but now conditions are different. There are more physicians and dentists to the population, and people are not obliged to tolerate such things. They are becoming more intelligent in their estimate of professional service, and they will not employ men whose brains are befuddled with overindulgence of any sort. A man must have a steady hand to practise dentistry successfully, and this he cannot have if he abuses his health by excesses.

Nor is the moral code as lax as it formerly was. Men may exclaim about the prevalence of immorality to-day, but the fact is that the exactions in moral rectitude are more closely drawn at the present time than ever before, and this is particularly true of men in professional life. The day has gone forever when mere brilliance of intellect will compensate for moral turpitude. No matter how brilliant a man may be his moral offences are no longer condoned as they once were. And after all, exactions of this kind are only in line with the normal evolution of mankind. Immorality is a retrogression which saps the foundations of society, and what is true of immorality in general is doubly true of immorality among professional men.

The simple truth is that a moral life is a more important factor in real success than most people imagine. It is the only certain foundation on which a professional practice can be built, and the sooner a young man comes to a full realization of this fact the better it will be, not only for his peace of mind, but for his material advancement. Bad habits disintegrate always; good habits invariably build up. And habit is

so insinuating, so dominating. It is often said, and truly, that bad habits are hard to break; but how many people recognize the significant fact that good habits are equally tenacious? As the years go on towards maturity and the individual becomes more and more dominated by habit, it will be found as difficult to give up a good habit as a bad one. This is at the same time a most encouraging fact and a solemn warning. It emphasizes the far-reaching importance of establishing good habits in youth when the individual is in the formative period and when the delicate balance between the right road and the wrong one is so easily turned. Let every young man carefully take account of his present status in this matter, and resolve to so place himself in relation to morality and the trend of his habits that his future may be secure in the fulfilment of all that is best and most worth attaining in life.

Honesty of Purpose.—Another concomitant adjunct to success in practice is the demonstration to the patient of an absolute honesty of purpose in everything that is done. A firm conviction of what is just and equitable to both patient

and operator should form the basis of every-day practice, and the dentist should early seek to establish confidence among his patients by a rigid adherence to a policy which has for its groundwork the principle of eternal right. If a man has in his very soul the essence of a basic honesty, he does not need to tell his patrons that he is honest. They will know it without the telling. The fact will shine through his every action, and will so illuminate his professional pathway that people will be intuitively drawn to him. When a man once establishes the reputation for rigid honesty he is more than half armed against dissension and misunderstanding. If a difference of opinion arises between a practitioner and his patient, the question as to whether or not the practitioner is really honest is one of the first which enters the mind of the patient. And if the dentist is known to be honest, his contention is invariably respected, even though the patient may not agree with him in opinion.

This matter of honesty relates as much to the details of the work performed, the pains taken with each operation, the character of the operation, the best judgment as to what shall or shall

not be done in a given case, and the advice upon matters with which the patient is not familiar, as it does to questions of finance or the purely business phase of practice. In other words, the dentist should be professionally honest as well as commercially so.

The mere fact of honesty is an element of immense strength to a man in any walk of life. The man who is fundamentally and profoundly honest need not be afraid of any other man or combination of men, and usually he is not. Honesty begets confidence, and confidence is the keynote to attainment. Unless a dentist has confidence he cannot expect to succeed. It is only through confidence in himself that he can inspire confidence on the part of others, and he should most assiduously cultivate this element in his character. It is hardly necessary to state in this connection that there is a vast distinction between an honest confidence and a vulgar self-conceit, though many a young man would seem to confuse the two. Self-conceit undermines and belittles, confidence builds up and magnifies. Confidence is cumulative, strong, and psychic in its influence, and there is scarcely any other one

element so potent as this in the successful building of a dental practice.

Punctuality and System.—The virtue of punctuality and system must also be emphasized in considering the requisites necessary for success in professional life. The man who conducts his practice in a hap-hazard way will have hap-hazard results, and such a man will usually be the first to wonder why he does not succeed. There is a reason for everything in this world; and if a man fails in life, there is some reason for it. It is only for the one who fails, to search out the cause of his failure, and then resolutely set himself to work to correct the fault, no matter at what cost of determination and perseverance. This last statement would seem to imply that the causes of a man's failure must necessarily be found connected with the man himself, and this is not merely an assumption, but a fundamental and most profound fact.

Many a promising dentist has thrown away a rare chance of success by lack of punctuality and system. In this age of intense activity in material pursuits the value of time becomes an important element in the conduct of one's affairs.

and no patient of any consequence will continue to patronize a dentist who does not economize time by being systematic. If a piece of work is promised at a certain time, the dentist should make it a rule to have it done at that time. The necessity for constantly apologizing on account of lapses in this regard invariably weakens the hold a dentist has on his patients and destroys the confidence they have in his general integrity. There is nothing so demoralizing as to find a man careless of his word or his promise. When an appointment is made with a patient for a certain hour, it should be the aim of the dentist to be ready for the patient at the appointed time if at all possible. Of course in a professional pursuit where the relief of pain is the paramount duty emergencies will arise which sometimes delay the practitioner beyond the time set, but these are only occasional and are easily explained and readily understood by the patient. This question of appointments will be considered in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

Knowledge of Human Nature. — Above all things else, to be a successful dentist a man must be a close student of human nature. I have

already said that the chief requisite for success in the practice of dentistry is efficiency,—in other words, that to be successful a dentist must be skilful,—and this statement still holds good. But I have also tried to show that there are other requisites aside from mere skill which enter materially into success, and of all of these I know of none more essential than this matter of studying the characteristics and temperaments of patients. To be perfectly and completely a master of his environment the dentist should be able to read like an open book every man or woman who comes into his office. And this can be accomplished by study,—a kind of study which really becomes the most fascinating and most profitable of all pursuits. To do this a dentist must come in contact with people as widely as possible, and he must cultivate to the highest degree the power of observation. No act or movement or impulse of any individual should escape him; and without in the least degree being impertinent or obtrusive he should try to fathom the motive which prompts people to act. This one great fundamental fact of motive is the key which unlocks many a hidden mystery of

human action and makes clear what would otherwise appear paradoxical in an individual. No two people can be successfully managed by the same methods, and in scarcely any pursuit—with the possible exception of medicine—is the ability to read human nature more important than in dental practice. A quick intuition of the temperament, the whims, the prejudices, the fancies, and the peculiarities of individuals is a wonderful talisman in the management of a practice, and the man who has successfully cultivated this has gone much farther than half way towards making his affairs run smoothly and satisfactorily.

The intimation is not here intended that a dentist should be at all cringing or subservient to the petty caprices or unreasoning domination of those who seek his services, but merely that he should have the tact, based on his knowledge of temperament, to so manage his patients that he can win their confidence and subsequently their full control. You cannot control patients till you have their confidence, and you cannot gain their confidence till you understand them. This study of human nature is most broadening

in its influence, and it is prolific of great good aside from the mere advantage it presents in a practical way.

It may not be clear to all as to just what is meant by the suggestion to handle patients differently on the basis of a knowledge of their varying moods and temperaments, but a single illustration will suffice to indicate the meaning. A business-man whose time is valuable, who has vast interests at stake, and who is not much given to speech may apply for an appointment. What that man wants is to have his dental work done in the most expeditious manner and with the fewest possible words. He does not come to the office to visit or gossip. Every unnecessary remark made by the dentist is just so much waste time to him, and he naturally resents personalities or trivial talk of any kind. A gentlemanly "Good-morning. Please be seated," and a prompt and business-like approach to the work in hand appeals to him at once. An operation may often be performed for such a man with scarcely a word from beginning to end,—the entire attention and energy of the operator being concentrated on the work rather than on any-

thing of a conversational nature. To a man like this any casual remark—even that connected with the nature of the work being done—is a needless distraction which diverts from the main purpose of the sitting and steals so much of his time. The fewer words the better with such a man, and anything aside from the ordinary courtesies of salutation and dismissal is uncalled for. It is all business with him, there is little of the social element in his make-up, and what small percentage there may be does not find the proper environment for its display in a dental office. You can gain that man's respect and favor more by what you leave unsaid than by anything you can say. It is the doing he wants,—the doing promptly and without any fussiness.

On the other hand, there are some individuals who are so socially inclined that they must talk and be talked to. The dental office is of course not the place for visiting or shop-talk or gossip of any kind. It should not be made the clearing-house of all the petty scandal of the community; and yet it must not be turned into a monastery or a bear's den. People must be courteously received, and some of them must be more or less

entertained while there. Certain individuals are so cheery and friendly in temperament that the dentist must himself take on an air of cheeriness and friendliness in dealing with them. To carry an individual of this character through an operation in the same brusque fashion demanded by the reserved business-man just referred to would be simple barbarity. It is necessary with some patients during an operation to make more or less of a running commentary on the work as it is being done. The mere fact of conversation is to them a wonderful relief of tension; and while they may be so situated with appliances in the mouth that they cannot well talk themselves, the carefully modulated and sympathetic voice of the operator encouraging them in trying periods of the work has a sustaining influence which must not be overlooked.

It should of course ordinarily be the aim of the operator to proceed with his work with as little waste of words as possible, and he should invariably discourage by example too much talking during an operation. The concentration of energy necessary to accomplish the best results — particularly where intricate work is

being done—is always disturbed and the harmony of results marred by frequent diversions of speech; and yet with patients of the temperament just indicated a certain amount of talking is necessary, not only for the pleasure it gives the patient but for its quieting influence during an operation.

This is only one of many ways in which a quick intuition of temperament may be made to do service in the management of patients. A constant display of tact and delicacy, the advantage to be taken of certain moods and fancies, the ability to say the right word at the right time, and particularly to avoid saying the wrong word, all of these embodied in an intricate and intimate knowledge of human nature will at once place the dentist in possession of the power to solve many of the difficult problems to be encountered in conducting a dental practice.

Essentials to Success can be Cultivated.—In thus briefly enumerating the various essentials to success it will be noted that the original proposition to the effect that these requisites were for the most part of a character that could be cultivated by persons of average ability still

holds good. A man cannot necessarily become a successful dentist by merely wishing to be, but he can attain to any of the essentials of success by application. It is the steady, sturdy plodder who wins in the end; and any young man with a taste for dentistry can assuredly win success if he only applies himself. The best message that can be sent out under this head is summed up in the one term—application. Without this no man can succeed in any calling, least of all in dentistry.

III

LOCATION

THE question of selecting a location is an important consideration for a young dentist. The choice between a country town and a large city always comes up for decision, as also does frequently the matter of locating in one's native place. Unless the young graduate has had some grounding in the management of the public and has some financial backing, he would probably better locate at first in a smaller place, because of the lesser responsibility and expense and the opportunity it gives him to study his capabilities and learn his limitations in practice. Few young men have an adequate idea of how much they still have to learn after graduating, and this training in the conduct of a country practice will prove of inestimable value, even though they eventually intend to seek a large city. There are very many things to be said in favor of the country town as a place of permanent practice,

and most of them apply with double force to the young man just starting out. He can more rapidly widen his acquaintance and can come personally into contact with a larger number of prospective patrons than he can hope to do in a city. If his practice falls off at times, he will not be immediately swamped by high rent and other corresponding expenses.

There are two chief drawbacks to a small place, one of which is really of no consequence, though it usually seems like a mountain to the over-sensitive young man, while the other may be considered a real objection. The first is the element of petty gossip so prevalent in small towns where people meet daily and almost hourly in conversational intercourse, and where the insignificant things of life are threshed over and over in the absence of matters of greater moment. The ancient if not venerable Mrs. Grundy—that past-mistress in the gentle art of annoying people—almost invariably takes up her blessed abode in the environs of a village or smaller town, and usually manages to make it interesting for the young men and maidens of the place. Her especial prey is the new-comer,

and woe betide the sensitive youth who allows himself to be annoyed by her prattle. The extent of injury she is able to work upon him is gauged solely by the nature of his attitude towards her. If he is irritated or chagrined or disturbed by her gossip, then he is to that degree injured; but that she can ever do him serious harm aside from this has never yet been demonstrated. One of the first things a young dentist should do in going to a strange town is to resolve to live an upright, manly life entirely above reproach, and then to pay no attention to the brigade of petty gossip-mongers. If he does this they will soon let him alone.

The other objection to a small town is the professional isolation. The constant association of men of his own calling is really of the greatest importance to a young man in the development of a well-rounded professional life, and lacking this he is too often inclined to drift away from high professional ideals and to lose the inspiration which comes only from contact with the thinking men of his profession. In the city he has the advantage of frequent society meetings, and this is a great source of help to him at a

critical period of his career. But the country dentist need not by any means be entirely deprived of professional association. There is always his State society, with possibly others at convenient distance, and then the dental journals, if conscientiously read, will keep him in close touch with the progress of the profession, so that he will not entirely lose the spirit of true professionalism.

There is one argument in favor of starting in a small town and subsequently moving to a larger place which relates particularly to the probability of numerous mistakes being made by the young practitioner in the early days of his practice. It is difficult for the beginner to avoid making mistakes, many of them of a nature that the older practitioner readily escapes; and it is frequently the bitter dregs from this crucible of early experiences which load a young man down and cling to him to his detriment long after he has attained sufficient perfection to avoid making mistakes of a similar nature. This incubus sometimes casts a shadow over his career in the town where the mistakes were made, and it is frequently a fortunate circumstance

which takes the young man away from such an environment and places him where he can begin life anew, armed with the superior knowledge which his experience has given him. While on general principles it is bad policy to move frequently, it may yet be the very best policy to move once and leave mistakes behind. Not that a man will ever get over making mistakes, but that many of those incident to early experience need not be made later on.

As to a young man locating in a town where he has grown up, the arguments are largely in its disfavor. The just distinction between a harum-scarum boy going to school and a dignified professional man conducting a practice is too great to be realized by the average community as existing in the same individual, and if a young man starts practice in his native place the people are too likely to look upon the newly-fledged dentist as only a very slight remove from the tow-headed boy, and are accordingly slow to admit him to a dignified standing in the community. They find it difficult to leave off calling him "Jack" or "Billy" or "Pete," and when it comes to calling him "Doctor" they blush for

his impertinence in assuming such a title. But let this same apparent young upstart go to a strange town, and he gets his title as the natural order of things, and without any hesitation on the part of the people.

It is true that the mere fact of calling a man "Doctor" does not insure his success in practice; but in order to command proper respect as a professional man the dentist should carry with him a certain degree of dignity which cannot well be attained in the face of too much familiarity. Then again, to begin practice among the people with whom one has grown up involves a difficulty in maintaining good business relations. There is always the expectancy on the part of those who apply for services that there shall naturally be some favoritism on the ground of old acquaintanceship. It is better to establish a practice among strangers and turn the patients into friends than to begin with friends and attempt to turn them into satisfactory patients.

IV

EXTENDING ACQUAINTANCE

WHEN a young man locates in a place it becomes necessary to extend his acquaintance as widely as possible along legitimate lines in order to rapidly gain patronage. If he goes a stranger into a town, or even into a city, it is always desirable to take letters of introduction to the influential people of the place. The first move he makes is very important, particularly with regard to the character of the people he meets. He should aim to cultivate good society at the outset, not necessarily—and often not preferably—the swell set, but people of good moral and business standing.

Letters of Introduction.—In presenting a letter of introduction the young man should exercise great care not to prejudice his case by consuming too much of the recipient's time. Usually men or women worth meeting have many demands on their time, and if a young man approaches such an individual without due

regard for this fact, he is quite likely to prove a bore. Let him present his letter in a business-like way, stating that he is desirous of making their acquaintance, but that he does not wish to waste their time. He can readily gather from the nature of the answer he receives just how much leeway he has in this particular, and can govern himself accordingly. Usually people of the right sort are glad to welcome newcomers to a town; and if the young man makes a favorable impression at the outset, it is not a difficult matter to extend his acquaintance. After he has met a dozen people in the place, his success from that time forward depends on himself. He should beware of boasting too much about what he proposes to accomplish in the way of practice, particularly if he goes to a place where there is already a dentist, but he must at all times preserve an air of quiet confidence that he will succeed. The unobtrusive self-assurance that he has within him the certain elements of success, the constant conviction that he must win, no matter what obstacles are placed in his path, this of itself is a potent factor in carrying a young man to success. No man ever

yet accomplished great things through the medium of despondency. Let the young man place the most promising construction on his prospects, but let him do it in such a way as not to give offence. A vulgar display of conceit always engenders distrust and reacts against the individual, but an attitude of calm assurance backed up by steady application creates confidence and more than half wins the battle.

The First Patient.—The first patient a young man puts in his chair for professional services should mark an event in his life. No matter how humble in position or circumstances this patient may be, the dentist should seek to make a favorable impression. In fact, in the management of each individual who applies to him the aim should invariably be to so treat the patient that it will result in the sending of other patients. The recommendation of an individual who has been in the hands of a dentist counts for more than any other kind of advertising, and it has the advantage that this is legitimate advertising. Show each patient that you have a vital interest in his or her welfare and that your relationship with the public is different from that of a trades-

man. Advise the patient always for what you believe to be the best, irrespective of your own financial relation to the matter, and when the fact that you do this becomes known, as it surely must, it will prove a strong tie to bind people to you.

The dentist should early seek to establish a community of interest between the patient and himself, so that their relationship becomes something more than a mere barter of money for professional services. He who develops an abiding friendship between himself and those who come to his office will never lack for patients, and some of the most cherished associations of a lifetime may be made in this way.

Social Functions.—Extending acquaintance through the medium of social functions is a perfectly proper thing to do, though the young man should have a care not to deport himself in such a way as to raise the suspicion that he is trying to advertise his profession. In fact, there is nothing more lacking in good form than the habit of talking shop at a social gathering. Aim to be cordial and pleasant with everybody, so that people are attracted to you by virtue of your

personality. There is no other quality so winning in society as that of invariably being a perfect gentleman, and this is something a young man can acquire by a close study of what is considered good form. The prime requisite for success in society is a never-failing and genuine courtesy. This will win where mere flashiness, either of apparel or wit, will fall short of permanent success.

If a young man draws people to him by virtue of his inherent qualities of sturdy manhood and uniform good will in society, they will naturally inquire into his calling, and the next step to that of their patronage is easy. But there is one feature of this that requires careful consideration. It is better always that people should not become personally too friendly or familiar with the dentist, for the reason that in the proper conduct of a practice there are always certain requirements which the dentist must demand of the patient and to which the patient if approached on a strictly professional basis will graciously accede, but which if the dentist is a close personal friend will not be so likely to be considered obligatory. In other words, it is more difficult

to establish legitimate professional discipline with a friend than with a stranger. The one matter of appointments will serve as an illustration of what is meant. It is necessary for the dentist, in order to profitably occupy his time, to arrange for his work on appointment, and it is to him a question of considerable moment that appointments be kept punctually. With a stranger this is quickly recognized and abided by, but an intimate friend is quite likely to ignore his obligation on the ground of familiarity and to presume on his friendship with the dentist for all kinds of laxity. As has already been said, it is better to obtain patients among strangers, and then when they have become familiar with the business methods of the dentist they will not depart from those methods and can safely be made into close personal friends.

The Church.—The church is often used as a means through which to extend acquaintance, and under certain circumstances it is a perfectly legitimate medium. The close personal relationship of the members of a church and the frequency with which they meet each other all tend to favor the rapid spread of personal acquaint-

anceship, and there is quite naturally a bond of common sympathy arising from mutual aims and interests which links the members together more closely than under ordinary associations of life. To fall in with this in a natural way on the part of a man who is at heart a sincere professor of religion and whose proper place is found in the church is well and good. There can be no criticism of this; and if a young man creates acquaintance under these conditions he may honorably find it of benefit to him in a business way.

But there is nothing in all the category of professional meanness which can compare in the slightest degree with an effort to use the church as a medium of securing practice on the part of a man who otherwise has no interest in it. To pose as a church-going man or as one who has religious motives by an individual whose only aim is to further his business ventures is the basest of all perfidy and should entitle him to the hearty contempt of every one. Hypocrisy is bad enough in any relation in life, but hypocrisy which uses the church as a cloak behind which to build up worldly interests is absolutely beyond the pale of decency or tolerance. Unless

the young man has religious instincts, or can go to church with pure motives for the purpose of receiving mutual or moral benefit, he would better stay away; or if he desires to go as a means of social enjoyment, let him at least avoid assuming a sanctimonius air or taking any prominent part in the functions of the church. In other words, let him avoid hypocrisy or deceit. No matter how successful a man may seem to be at this kind of game for a time, his sins will surely find him out, and his ultimate portion will be contempt and distrust on the part of the people. Even if he could succeed in deceiving the people, and thereby secure their patronage, there is always behind every hypocritical act a corresponding disintegration of character in the individual himself which ultimately will undermine the strongest personality and defeat the shrewdest aims.

Let the young man be honor-bright in every relation of life, but particularly let him avoid trafficking with things so sacred as the religious convictions of the community in which he lives. I would rather cope with an open-handed devil any time than trust for one moment the fawning

pretence of a sanctimonious hypocrite. Permanent success never yet came from following unworthy methods, and of all of these methods none is more detestable than the one of working the church for professional purposes.

V

MANAGING PATIENTS

The Management of Children.—To be successful in the management of children means a great deal in the maintenance of a satisfactory and permanent practice. The children of to-day make the patients of a few years hence, and if a practitioner has the tact and patience to control children from the time they first come to him till they grow to years of accountability he can then have a class of practice built upon the lines of his own choosing and of a character to harmonize best with his individual preference. There is nothing more interesting in life than to watch the development of a child and study the various manifestations of character-building as exemplified in their attitude towards one with whom they are brought into such close relationship as the dentist. Child-study is always instructive, and it is doubly so when conducted from the point of view of a professional associa-

tion. The dentist should early aim to understand his little patients, to gain their confidence and enlist their sympathy with whatever he attempts to accomplish for them. If he really loves children and always treats them in a frank and cordial manner, he will in turn receive at their hands a reciprocal attachment which eventually will prove one of the greatest inspirations to high professional endeavor. The implicit confidence of a child is no small thing to attain, and he who has this is not altogether bereft of satisfaction in the conduct of his affairs.

The first thing a dentist must learn in the management of children is not to deceive them. He should aim to avoid giving pain to a child whenever possible; but if it is found necessary to inflict pain in an operation, the child should never be promised that there will be no pain. The magnitude of the hurt must of course not be exaggerated in advance. In fact, it is best ordinarily to make light of it and place the best possible construction on it. It is usually well to say to the child that the dentist cannot always tell precisely whether an operation will hurt or not, but that if it does hurt a little, the

child may be sure that the dentist will be very careful about it and not hurt in the slightest degree more than is necessary. But to promise that it shall not hurt, and thereby gain the little patient's consent to an operation which in the nature of it must give pain, is an abominable subterfuge which reacts on the dentist and raises a suspicion in the child's mind which subsequent years are powerless to efface. Different children require different methods to manage them, and with some especially obstinate and unreasonable children it may at times be necessary to employ force in accomplishing the end, but ordinarily a little tact will win the day. With most children an adroit appeal to their manhood or womanhood will work marvels. The child-mind is wonderfully susceptible to praise and encouragement, and a word which touches their pride will go far towards nerving them up to an operation.

No attitude should ever be taken towards a child except one of extreme kindness. Even if it becomes necessary to coerce a child into an operation, it should be done in the kindliest manner, and never with a display of temper; and if

an issue has arisen whereby the child has been compelled to submit against his will, the dentist should take great pains to so soothe his feelings subsequently by a kindly encouraging interest in his welfare that the child will leave the office without harboring any resentment. It is sometimes astonishing how a stubborn child will yield to a gentle reasoning and a cordial show of kindness immediately following a contention in which the dentist has come out master of the situation. Kindness is very soothing under these circumstances, and it also proves to the child that, after all, the dentist is a good friend, and if he does hurt, it is only because of necessity and solely for the patient's good.

But it is best if possible to avoid giving much pain to children. Usually palliative measures are preferable wherever they can be made effective, particularly till the little patient has grown accustomed to coming to the dentist and has been led up by a skilful system of management to the point where a reasonable amount of pain will be tolerated without protest. The first visit of a child to a dental office is usually a momentous occasion, and except under the most

urgent necessity no pain should ever be given at this time. The child, if timid, should be entertained by the dentist in such a way that so far as the dentist personally is concerned there is no fear. It is frequently well to make the first examination of the teeth without putting the little tot in the dental chair, and if the child is very young, it is usually best to have the mother or nurse hold it in her lap. Then when the first mere glance is had the dentist should say something complimentary either of the teeth or of the patient, and if the child is not too timid he should pat the little round cheek in a friendly way, and the ice is broken once for all so far as that child is concerned. The gentle touch of the human hand has a wonderful effect on a child, and a demonstrated tenderness on the part of the dentist at this first visit influences largely his subsequent success with the little patient.

It is sometimes marvellous what children will bear in the way of pain without protest if perfect confidence has been established and an appeal is made to their pride. And the first requisite is the establishment of confidence.

The teeth of children are often sensitive and unfortunately there are in many instances two serious handicaps under which the dentist must proceed. One is the proverbial dread of the dental chair which has usually been instilled into the mind of the child by foolish tea-table chat at home in which their elders have vied with each other in an attempt to tell the biggest story about the awful things which have happened to them in the dental office. It seems to be a peculiar trait of human nature to wish to pose as a hero, and lacking any other opportunity of displaying heroism most individuals readily fall back on dentistry as a stock topic. From the individual who had a tooth extracted with "four prongs all standing straight out," or "hooked around the jawbone," or having "been pulled all over the office," to the equally luckless mortal who "had a live nerve taken right out without an anæsthetic," they run the gamut of dental adventures to the delectation of their listeners and themselves. And the children hear all this, and store it away in their little impressionable consciousness till they go to the dentist, and then up looms the vision of all these

terrible things they have heard, and they intuitively shrink from the dentist as if he were a goblin made for the especial purpose of devouring them. This sort of handicap is sometimes difficult to overcome, but tact, ingenuity and patience will usually accomplish it.

The other handicap referred to relates to the kind of discipline—or lack of discipline—to which the child is accustomed at home. Unfortunately many children are allowed to grow up without the slightest conception of responsibility or without the development of any stamina or moral fiber in their make-up. They have always been allowed to drift along the lines of least resistance, and to escape every issue of a serious or disagreeable nature. They are petted and pampered till they become convinced that the world was made to revolve around them, and that it is their inherent right to have life made easy for them—that in short if anything unpleasant or painful is to happen it must be made to happen to some one else and not to them. It has been the custom of their parents to shield them in every possible way, to remove

the pebbles from their paths and to round off all sharp or irritating corners from the walls along the walks of life. It is a revelation to a child brought up in this way to find that when a sensitive cavity appears in a tooth and the tooth pains as a consequence that the only possible way to have the condition remedied is to allow the dentist to excavate the decay from the cavity and do other disagreeable things, and to do them on the child's own tooth. Here is a case—and it may be the first one the child has ever encountered—where some one else may not accept the hard knocks of fate, and the awakening is sometimes an exceedingly bitter one to the child. Under such circumstances the dentist is likely to be looked upon not only as an ogre but as a malicious enemy, and the handicap of such an impression is not always an easy one to overcome. But there is usually a way—not often twice the same way—by which these unfortunate children can be managed, and it is the duty of the practitioner to devote his best energies to the task.

There is a wondrous mentality wrapped up in a sensitive child, and it should be a sacred

trust for those to whom the care of such children is committed to study carefully the myriad mainsprings of motive behind every act and thereby learn to bring out the best there is in this tiny "bundle of possibilities."

To the dentist it is given to accomplish great good with such children on account of the close relationship existing between patient and practitioner; and no man can make a careful and continued observation of child-life in this connection without thereby being made vastly better himself. The results will repay a thousand times for the effort.

The Management of Nervous Patients.—Next to children, those patients who are nervous or in ill-health require more diplomacy to manage than any other class, and no rule or set of rules can be made to apply to all of them. They vary so in their freaks and fancies that it is a matter of constant study to control them, and yet, in view of the fact that they are often in need of dental service, no dentist can ever be in the highest degree successful unless he develops sufficient tact to deal with them. The keynote in their management, the same as with children, is

kindness. Above all things the dentist should cultivate a gentleness of manner and a sympathetic, well-modulated tone of voice, which more than anything else will be effective in gaining their confidence. Patience of the most sublime type is also required, and a constant scrutiny of their varying moods so as to be able to adapt one's self to them. On approaching the mouth to do anything for such patients it is essential to practise the utmost delicacy of touch and to avoid if possible giving any pain, particularly in the early stages of the operation. There is one influence of immense advantage to be used in the management of these patients,—viz., encouragement and commendation. To say an encouraging word and to compliment the patient on the manner in which the operation is being endured is frequently a wonderful stimulus. But occasionally a case presents in which the patient is more foolish than nervous and where a certain amount of firmness and decision is needed. If an operator continues to allow a patient of this type to impose on him, he not only wastes his time, but even loses the respect of the patient. Every practitioner should make

a careful study of this type of patient so that he may quickly distinguish between an individual who is really nervous, and who accordingly requires and deserves the utmost consideration, and one who is simply irresponsible and whimsical. This latter class can usually be detected by a little artifice on the part of the operator. If there is a suspicion in his mind that the patient is feigning distress in an operation where there is no occasion for it, by flinching and otherwise acting badly, he can test the matter very readily by merely placing an excavator or other instrument with some pressure against a sound part of the tooth where he knows there is no possible chance of causing any pain. It will frequently be found with this type of patient that there will be the same flinching and the same protestations of pain as if a sensitive part of the cavity had actually been touched. It has merely become a fixed habit with the patient to protest, and such persons seem never to feel quite satisfied unless they are discommoding the operator in every conceivable way. This sort of trifling with an operator's time and patience should not be tolerated in the slightest degree, and when the im-

position is once discovered the patient should be given to understand most emphatically that the operator has some rights in the case and that he proposes to enforce them. It may at times even be necessary to be somewhat severe with such patients; but the dentist should never be ungentlemanly in any instance, and wherever severity is used it should invariably be tempered by a subsequent kindliness of manner which proves to the patient before the sitting is over that the dentist is not pettish or vindictive and that he does not give way to severity through any display of temper. Above all things the patient should be dismissed from the office carrying away an impression that the dentist is master of the situation, but that he dispenses his mastery with the utmost kindness. A dentist owes it to himself, to his patients, and particularly to his profession that he maintains the reputation of being at all times a high-minded gentleman, and in no instance of his professional relationship is this of greater moment than in his dealing with the class of patients under consideration.

It is often possible by the exhibition of a little tact and judgment to so control some of these

irresponsible individuals that a permanent impression is made upon them to the betterment of their disposition, and a dentist's influence for good may thereby be widened far beyond the mere service he performs upon the teeth. A man in any walk of life should have the broadest possible conception of his duty to his fellow-man, and in the practice of a profession this duty is particularly obligatory; so that a dentist should never be content with the mere performance of his technical operations without a wider interest in his patient's general welfare. This does not imply that a dentist should ever go out of his way to pry into matters that are none of his affair. A gossipy, inquisitive dentist is an abomination in the sight of intelligent people, and, aside from its impertinence, such a course is especially prejudicial to his success. But he can take an active interest in his patient and can often find opportunities for a genuine service in character-building—particularly with children and nervous, irresponsible individuals—without in the slightest degree intruding beyond the limits of propriety or in any way compromising himself.

The Management of Patients in General.—As has already been intimated, no dentist can expect to be successful unless he first learns how to manage the different types of people who come to him. A dentist should be able to read character in the face of every individual and to know how to approach each different class the moment they appear. Not that he should constantly sink his own individuality into that of others, but that he may so control the individualities of those who come under his ministrations that he can make his practice run along smoothly and without the friction which often mars the career of the most promising practitioner. Enough has already been said along this line, but its importance cannot be too strongly urged nor too often repeated.

VI

RECORDS AND BOOK-KEEPING

In approaching this part of the subject the author realizes that he is assuming a herculean task in attempting to convince the dental profession of the necessity for keeping acurate records and for establishing and maintaining a business-like method of book-keeping. It has long become proverbial that the average dentist is notoriously careless when it comes to matters of record, and so far as his accounts are concerned it would tax more than the genius of an expert book-keeper to unravel them and make them intelligible to an ordinary business-man.

The necessity for keeping records relates not only to the business aspect of the case but to the professional as well. No man can gain the greatest possible benefit from his experience in practice without having records of his work for ready reference as a basis to guide him in future. It is only by this means that he can form an

adequate idea as to the relative value in his hands of the different methods of practice. He may read in the journals and text-books of the characteristics of the various materials used for filling teeth, but not till he has demonstrated in his own practice the relative permanence of each material is he in a position to properly judge as to which material is the one for him to use in a given case. He may see in our literature various methods of practice advocated, and he may form an opinion as to which method he should follow, but until he has made a practical test and observed the results he is not qualified to properly discriminate in favor of one method as against another.

And the only way to judge of the value of materials or methods is through the medium of records carefully preserved. If an operator has a record of each operation, with the date, the kind of material used, and other particulars, he can at once refer to the history of a given piece of work when he sees it and be able to form an opinion as to the virtue of that method of practice.

The clinical value of a well-kept record be-

comes inestimable as the years go on, and it may eventually be turned to the advantage of the profession at large as well as to the individual himself by a publication of the data furnished by it upon any given subject. It is therefore a duty which each man owes the profession to so record his work that the sum total of the knowledge gained thereby shall be added to the information already extant upon the subject, to the end that the greatest progress possible be made by the profession as a body.

But even if the professional phase of the question does not appeal to a man, there is still an argument which should move every practitioner not to think lightly upon so important a precaution from a business point of view. This relates to his protection from imposition on the part of patients concerning the permanence or otherwise of the work which he has done for them. It is manifestly out of the question for a dentist to remember the facts about each filling he inserts, the kind of material, the date upon which it was inserted, or other particulars of the operation; and if he makes a practice of merely charging for an operation without keeping a special record

of it he is at the mercy of the patient so far as concerns its length of service. Patients are much inclined to misrepresent an operator in this particular, sometimes innocently and sometimes wilfully.

If a filling, for instance, is lost from a cavity anywhere in the mouth it is quite the habit for persons to jump to the conclusion that it was inserted by the operator who last worked for them, and he frequently gets the reputation of having done a faulty piece of work unless he can prove otherwise. It is often the case that a patient suddenly finds a cavity in a region of the mouth where within a year there has been a filling inserted, and the natural inference is that the filling has fallen out. Cases of this kind often occur where the enamel suddenly breaks in over a carious place and makes manifest a large cavity which previously had been hidden from the patient, and in the assertion that a filling has been lost a patient may be perfectly innocent. Then again it is an unfortunate fact that there are some individuals who do not hesitate to charge a dentist with the loss of a filling when they know he is blameless, as a subterfuge

to gain favoritism in its reinsertion. There are numberless abuses of this character which assail a busy practitioner, and his only safeguard is a system of well-kept records. When it becomes prominently known that he records every operation, patients will be more careful about attributing failures to him until they are certain of their ground; and in the event of an honest difference of opinion in regard to the character of an operation or the length of service it has given, the matter can readily be cleared up to the satisfaction of all concerned by a reference to the records. Not only this, but the fact that a dentist keeps records of his operations at once establishes confidence on the part of patients. They are impressed with the fact that he is willing to stand by his work and abide the consequences, and they come to him with all the greater assurance that he is a responsible party. In fact, the most desirable class of patients are so fast becoming educated to the idea of having records kept that they are naturally suspicious of the operator who fails in this important particular; and if a dentist were unable to show such a patient a diagram of the work done he

would at once lose caste so far as that patient was concerned.

It is an immense satisfaction after many years of practice in one locality for the operator to be able to refer to the records of operations performed for his long-standing patients, and note the tenure of service performed by some of his painstaking operations. It is almost invariably the case that patients err somewhat in their estimate as to the length of time a given operation has stood. No matter how vividly they may remember the circumstances of an operation, they are inclined as the years go by to place the time of its performance at a period more recent than is actually the case, and this occurs with the most conscientious patients. It is only in line with the universal fact of the rapid flight of time and is no reflection on their veracity. But it is sometimes a great satisfaction for the dentist to be able to turn to his records and establish the precise date for the patient. They are thereby frequently impressed with the value of dental service in a way that nothing else could accomplish, and are at once placed in a more appreciative mood towards future efforts on the part of

the practitioner. They are also more willing to adequately remunerate the dentist for his work.

A case in point may be related as typical of many similar ones which arise in the experience of every practitioner of long standing. A patient one day pointed to a gold crown on a lower molar and remarked that it was the best tooth he had. The dentist asked him how long it had been in use. He thought a moment, and said: "It must have been put on nine or ten years ago."

The operator consulted his records, and found that the crown had been placed there fifteen years before; and when the patient heard this he expressed surprise, and asked: "How much did you charge me for that crown?"

"Twenty dollars."

"Well, it has paid for itself many times over. What a pity my teeth were not properly attended to when I was younger."

A father with sentiments like these is not likely to allow his children's teeth to go neglected, and the aggregate of impressions made upon the people in this way will go farther than anything else towards developing a proper regard for the

value of dental service and a desire to have it attended to early in life. Without a record and a diagram properly marked it would have been difficult to convince this gentleman that his crown had done service so many years, but with the record there was no longer any doubt.

One of the most important considerations connected with record-keeping by the dentist relates to the identification of the dead. It sometimes happens in criminal cases, and in the event of a great disaster, such, for instance, as the burning of the bazaar in Paris and the Iroquois fire in Chicago, that bodies are disfigured beyond recognition by any ordinary means. The effect of fire, or a long period of decomposition such as is found in some murder cases, may obliterate completely the usual marks of identification. It is well known that the teeth are the last structures of the body to undergo disintegration after death, and thus the records of dental operations are more permanent and reliable than any other. It was by this means that identification was established in doubtful cases following the Paris disaster, and it has been instrumental in clearing up many an otherwise unsolved prob-

lem in criminal history. A body was found in one of our Western States decomposed beyond recognition. The authorities tried every means of identification but without avail, till they hit on the idea of examining the mouth. A chart was prepared of the dental work done on the teeth, and this was published in leading dental journals, through which medium identification was established by the dentist who had done the work. Criminologists and detectives are becoming more and more impressed with the reliability of dental records and are frequently appealing to dentists for aid in clearing up doubtful cases. In the light of present-day knowledge on the subject it would be a serious reflection on a dentist if his services were sought in one of these cases and it was found that he did not keep records.

Another important advantage of having records relates to the rendering of accounts, a matter which will receive more detailed consideration further on. In fact, no dentist can hope to keep his affairs in systematic or satisfactory order who fails to make and preserve accurate records of all his work.

Methods of keeping Records and Accounts.— There are two principal methods of keeping accounts and two of making records. Accounts may be kept by means of the index-card system or by books in the usual way. Some operators prefer the card system as being best adapted to their use, while others favor books, and each operator should examine both systems and select that which most appeals to him. There is this to be said in favor of books, that in many years of practice the bulk of cards which accumulate where records are preserved as they should be is as much greater than books as the cards are thicker than paper, and an operator can therefore keep preserved between the covers of the book a larger number of records and accounts in given bulk than he could of cards stored away in boxes. The card system may in some cases appeal to beginners on account of a few favorable features, but with men in practice who have already a large number of records in book form it can hardly be expected that they will change their system for something so radically different.

As to the manner of making records of operations there are, as has been said, two plans,—

one by means of a code and the other by a diagram. The code system is descriptive, while the diagram is illustrative. To use the code method the operator must employ to a large degree the first letter of a word in lieu of the word itself. For instance, if he has inserted a filling in the disto-occlusal surface of a bicuspid, instead of writing "disto-occlusal," he merely writes "d-o," and this kind of abreviation is carried on throughout the system. By this method no diagram is used; and while with some who have studied the matter closely and have used it for some time in practice there may be a fair degree of accuracy about it, yet to the mind of the author it cannot compare in several important particulars with the diagram method. In the first place, to trace a certain filling from the mouth to the date on the ledger or record book one might at times be obliged to go through the entire record before coming across this particular filling, while with a diagram a mere glance at the tooth in the record book with its accompanying number will tell the whole story at once. Then again a code system is never quite so impressive to patients, and, short of a great deal of unneces-

sary explanation, cannot be made sufficiently intelligible to appeal to them; but a diagram, with the teeth clearly outlined and a filling in a given position on any tooth plainly marked, instantly conveys its own description and can be readily understood. For these reasons, and for others which will become apparent later on, the diagram method should be adopted for general use.

Examination of the Teeth.—When a patient applies for dental service and requests an examination of the teeth, the examination-blanks put up in pads by the dealers with a diagram of the teeth upon them should be used for recording cavities in the presence of the patient. It is seldom that patients have any idea of the number of cavities they have in their teeth, and it is always best to impress them with the precise condition of affairs at the outset, so that there can be no subsequent misunderstanding about the amount of work to be done. The surest way to do this is to place the examination-pad upon the operating-table in front of the patient, and, as the examination goes on, record each cavity with a pencil on the exact region of the tooth where

the cavity occurs, and draw a line out from the cavity towards the margin of the examination-slip. These lines radiating out from the cavities serve a useful purpose in several ways. They can be numbered to indicate the cavity instead of attempting to place the number near the cavity and thus blur the diagram of the tooth, and besides they prove an eloquent reminder to the patient as to the number of cavities present in the mouth. If, when the examination is completed and the cavities recorded, the patient does not seem to be sufficiently impressed with the extent of the work to be done, and it is thought advisable to call attention to it, a very neat way of doing so is to merely count the cavities on the examination-slip and to check them off in the presence of the patient. This will instantly impress the matter upon the patient's notice, so that there can be no possible chance of misconception.

When the examination is completed and an appointment made, the slip should be placed on a hook provided for this purpose convenient to the operating-case, and every morning before office hours the appointment-book should be examined and the slips for the patients who have

appointments for that day should be placed in regular rotation on top of all other slips, so as to be convenient. When a patient takes the chair, a mere glance at the slip shows what is to be done, and this does away with the necessity of examining the teeth each time the patient comes. When a tooth is filled, an indication of this fact with the kind of material used is made on the examination-slip, as will be illustrated later, and the slip laid aside till the day's work is done. At the end of the day the operator can take the slips for that day and transfer with ink the records to the diagrams in the ledger, and make the charges. As he does this he can cancel the fillings thus recorded on the examination-slips, so that a glance will show which cavities have been filled and which not. The slips are then hung on the hook again ready for the next appearance of the patient. If an operator employs an assistant, as all operators should, this clerical work can be relegated to the assistant, and all the record-making that the operator need to do is to mark the cavities in pencil on the examination-slip as he looks over the mouth for the first time.

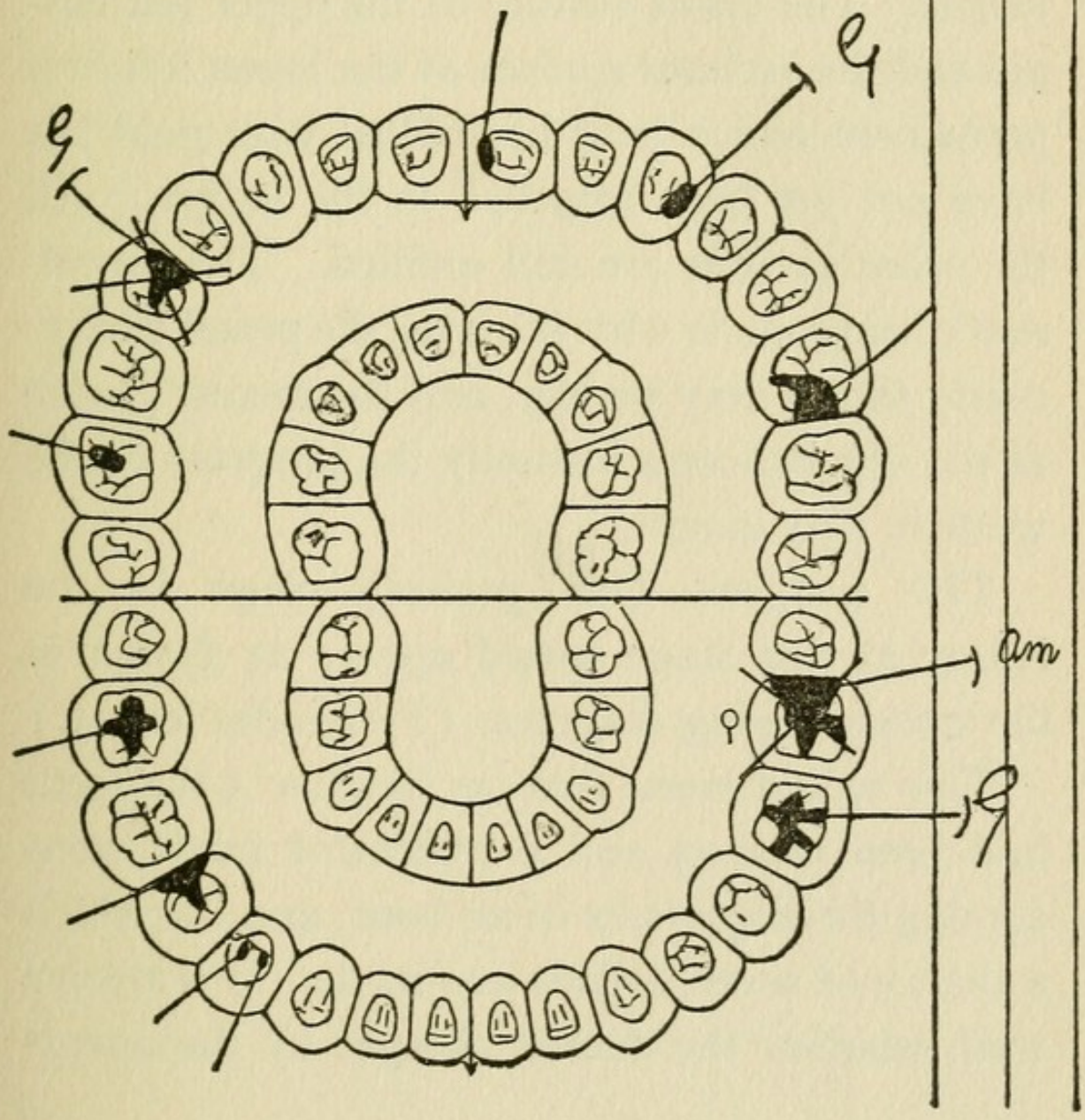
To illustrate the working of the system the following examination-slip may be taken as typical:

_____190 **Pa**_____

Mr. *H. Y. Jones*

Ad *83 Blank Street*

Re *First National Bank*

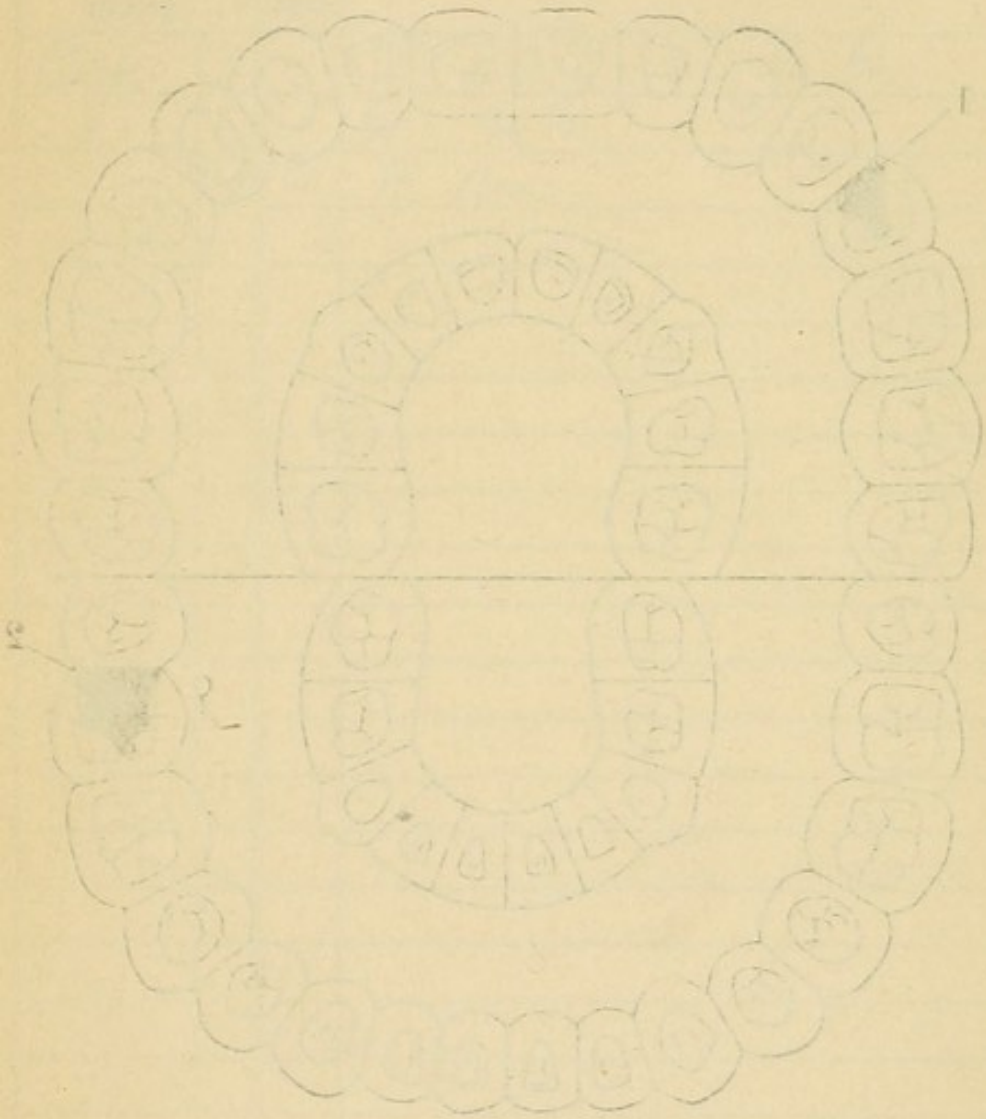


This slip in its present condition shows that the left lower second molar has been filled with amalgam and that the roots have also been filled as indicated by the small mark to the lingual. The cross over the filling cancels the record and shows that it has been transferred to the ledger. The upper right second bicuspid has been filled with gold and the record transferred to the ledger. The distal surface of the upper left cuspid and the occlusal surface of the lower left first permanent molar have been filled with gold but have not yet been recorded in the ledger. All the other cavities are still unfilled. The cancel-mark being made with ink over the pencil cavity-mark, shows very plainly, and the merest glance at the slip indicates instantly the progress of the work in that mouth.

The Ledger.—This patient's page in the ledger at this stage would appear as shown in the accompanying diagram. (Fernandez ledger.)

This would mean that on October 3 the teeth had been cleaned and a treatment made, consuming three-quarters of an hour, and for which a charge of seven dollars was made. It is always well, whether the dentist charges by the opera-

DATE.		No.		



tion or by the hour, to indicate the length of time spent in such work as cleaning or treating, in case of any question arising regarding fees. People in general have not yet been sufficiently educated to a just appreciation of the effort involved in cleaning and treating teeth, and they are inclined to look upon it as a trifling service. A filling is something tangible to them, and they are willing to pay for it, but an adequate charge for cleaning or treating is sometimes resented unless the dentist can show them the actual time spent in such work. On October 6 a gold filling was inserted and a treatment made,—fee twelve dollars. The number in the third column of the ledger corresponding with the number on the diagram shows the precise filling which was inserted on that date. On this same day the patient paid ten dollars on account, which is duly entered in the credit column. On October 13 the roots of the lower molar were filled and amalgam inserted in the cavity,—fee seven dollars.

Thus the record and account may be carried on down till the work is finished, and when more work is done for the patient at a subsequent date it is entered on this same page and the record

of the mouth kept complete in one place, to be referred to at a moment's notice. There is always room at the margin of the diagram or at the foot of the account column to record anything special about a given tooth, so that the entire history of the mouth may be kept in the most compact and convenient manner. By the use of abbreviations to indicate operations and fillings as here illustrated it is possible to condense a vast number of records and a very extensive series of accounts in one book, thus giving a ready reference under one cover for a great many patients.

Mailing-Sheets.—To facilitate the monthly rendering of accounts it is necessary to have some plan whereby the operator or his book-keeper is not obliged to go through the entire ledger or series of ledgers each month in search of unpaid accounts. This is readily managed by having ruled mailing-sheets printed, as shown on page 95.

These sheets should be about eight by eleven inches in size; and when a patient's work is completed and the last entry made in the ledger, the book-keeper should place the name on this

Name	Address	Page	Date and Service	Amount
H. Y. Jones	*83 Blank Street*	*34*	*Oct. 3d to 31st, 1902,* *10 G. 1 Am. 1 R. Cl. & Tr.*	*$97*

sheet, with the address, page of the ledger account, date of the work, etc., as indicated, and from this the accounts may be made out each month and mailed. By this means not only is the mailing of accounts rendered very easy, but the operator has at all times a list of outstanding bills gathered together in the most compact form. These sheets may be conveniently slipped into the front or back of the ledger for the most ready reference, and it is usually well every six months to go through the ledger to see that all outstanding accounts are recorded on the sheets. When an account is paid, a line should be drawn through it to cancel it, in addition to crediting it in the ledger.

The Day-Book.—In order to keep informed on the amount of charges and cash for each day it is necessary to have a book ruled somewhat in the manner shown on page 97.

This would indicate that on November 3, 1902, Mr. G. H. Brownmier had ten dollars worth of work done; that Mrs. E. X. Zane had eight dollars charged, and paid five dollars on account; and that Mr. O. V. Blank made a payment of twelve dollars on a previous account.

November, 1902

		CHARGES	CASH
3	*G. H. Brownmier*	*$10*	
3	*Mrs. E. X. Zane*	*8*	*$5*
3	*O. V. Blank*		*12*

The columns of charges and cash may be footed up and carried forward from page to page till the end of the month, when the sum total of each may be reckoned, and the dentist knows at once how much work he has done and the amount of cash taken in during the month.

At the end of this day-book a page may be ruled off in such a way as to record the monthly charges and receipts, from which by the mere

adding up of a column may be estimated the yearly statement:

1902	CHARGES	CASH	1903	CHARGES	CASH
Jan.....	$1,184	$1,296			
Feb.....	1,033	948			
March...	1,345	1,298			
April....	1,405	1,501			
May.....	983	1,047			
June.....	1,534	1,318			
July.....	1,213	1,108			
August..	750	914			
Sept.....	1,079	836			
Oct.....	1,428	1,309			
Nov.....	1,346	1,401			
Dec.....	1,106	983			
Total..	$14,406	$13,959			

By this method a glance will show the amount of work done and cash collected in a given month or a given year, and the plan is very simple and not at all cumbersome in its practical application.

The system of records and book-keeping herein outlined is not submitted as being ideal or suited to the needs of every practitioner, but that it is a very effective system has been amply proved

by many years' test, and the more the records accumulate and the accounts extend the more effective does it seem to become. Through this agency the operator may almost instantly refer to the diagram record of any mouth, he may know at once how a certain account stands, he can have his bills mailed each month from a convenient list, and he can determine at a moment's notice the exact amount of work and the cash receipts of any given day, month, or year.

Whether this particular method is used or some other plan more suited to the individual operator, the plea is once again very strongly urged to establish a system of record-making and book-keeping whereby the business interests and professional status of the profession shall be maintained in the highest possible degree of excellence and precision.

VII

APPOINTMENTS AND SITTINGS

In such work as dentistry it is usually necessary that it be done for the most part on appointment. Of course exigencies arise in every practice which demand immediate attention, but for extended operations the only satisfactory way is to arrange for them in advance. In view of the fact that the dentist's time is his capital, he should early seek to establish among his patients a just appreciation of the necessity for punctuality, and in order to do this he must always aim to be punctual himself. There must of course be a little latitude for emergencies on the part of both operator and patient, and this should be taken good-humoredly, but the general rule should obtain that when an appointment is made it shall be kept promptly on both sides.

Broken Appointments.—There should be an understanding with the patients that when an appointment is not kept there shall be a just

remuneration for loss of time unless the dentist receives sufficient notice to fill the time with another patient. To justify himself in making such a charge he should have a notice on his appointment-cards to the effect that the time appointed is reserved for the patient and that a failure to keep the appointment will necessitate a charge for loss of time unless a reasonable notice is given. Every patient who makes an appointment should receive a card with the day and hour plainly marked on it, to avoid mistakes through misunderstanding or forgetfulness. If an appointment is made by telephone, it is usually best to mail an appointment-card or request the patient to make a note of it at the time the appointment is made.

Examination Notices.—Connected with the appointment system there is a certain feature in vogue in the better offices which should be more generally introduced than it is. This relates to a system of notification whereby patients are reminded at stated intervals by the dentist that their teeth should be examined and an appointment arranged for that purpose. With patients who are extensively occupied with other affairs

—as most patients are—the time is too often allowed to slip by till the teeth are suffering through neglect, sometimes to the extent of irreparable damage. If there is a mutual understanding between patient and dentist, the matter may be so arranged that a memorandum is made in the appointment-book, and the patient notified at the proper time to appear for examination. Most patients if intelligent are very appreciative of this service, and the arrangement is exceedingly satisfactory to all parties concerned. It relieves the patient of the responsibility of remembering that his teeth may need attention and assures him that they will not be neglected, while it enables the dentist to keep better control of the teeth and to avoid annoying complications through deferring operations too long.

A propitious time to broach this plan to the patient is at the conclusion of a series of sittings which have been made more taxing and prolonged on account of previous neglect, when the patient is usually in a mood to gladly welcome such an arrangement. Of course in no instance should such a notice be sent to a patient without a previous understanding in the matter, lest there

arise a suspicion in the mind of the patient that the dentist is soliciting patronage. To prove to patients that it is the regular custom of the practitioner to send these notices, it is well to have notification-cards printed ready for mailing at the appointed time. These cards may read something like this:

"In accordance with your request of (naming the date of last sitting) I beg leave to remind you that your teeth should be examined at this time."

Or, if the patient prefers, the notification may be made by telephone.

This plan carried out extensively in one's practice insures good attention to the teeth and enables the operator to systematize his work and utilize his time to the best advantage.

Length of Sittings.—There is a great variation among practitioners in regard to the number of appointments they make in a day, and every man must arrange his sittings according to the plan which appeals most to him; but in a general way operators should avoid giving long sittings whenever possible. There are several reasons why short sittings are most desirable. To keep

a patient too long in the chair is to run the risk of nervous strain, and in fact the fortitude of many a patient has in this way been broken so as to engender a vivid dread of dental operations ever after. In the highly nervous organisms with which we are called upon to deal in these days of stress it is taking serious chances to detain a patient under a dental operation for three or four hours at a time, as is sometimes done. It is also a severe tax on the dentist to operate for one individual so long. A change from one patient to another breaks the monotony of operations and proves a rest. Then again where long appointments are arranged with patients it is a more serious matter to have an appointment broken, and entails a greater loss either on patient or operator, than where short sittings are made. Another minor consideration relates to the impression on the patient as regards the size of the bill. To many individuals a sitting is a sitting and they make little discrimination between one of two hours and one of three hours, while the difference to the dentist is quite appreciable. Usually a patient will more cheerfully pay a reasonable fee for eight sittings

of one hour each than for two sittings of four hours each.

Under ordinary circumstances it is never well to give a longer sitting than two hours, and with most of our operations one hour is ample. Of course the operator should never crowd his appointments to the extent of interfering with perfect service, but the tendency of the day should be towards short sittings rather than long ones.

VIII

GIVING CREDIT, COLLECTING ACCOUNTS. PAYING BILLS

THE evil of long credits is one of the greatest abominations attaching either to the professions or to trade, and yet with the established customs of the day it seems necessary for the dentist to occasionally extend credit to his patients. The nature of the work is such that to give a bill at each sitting is burdensome, and in many instances with certain patients of the very highest class it would be embarrassing, so that short credits at least seem inevitable. This of itself would not constitute a serious evil if these same short credits did not too often become long ones. Lengthy credits are wrong in principle and exasperating in practice, and the dentist should so conduct his affairs that it soon becomes manifest to his patients that he is opposed to giving unlimited credit.

There are two phases of the question for the

young practitioner to consider,—the persons to whom credit shall or shall not be given, and the length of time that shall be extended to those to whom it is deemed advisable to give credit. When new patients apply to the dentist for his services it is usually customary for them to mention the name of the person who has referred them. If a stranger asks to have work done without some reference of this kind, it is best for the dentist to adroitly bring up the subject in some inoffensive way. He must sail his bark between the Charybdis of offending a possible prospective and desirable patient and the Scylla of doing work for a possible dead beat. If no other opportunity presents, it is well to remark in a casual way, as if it were merely incidental and without special significance: "Did one of my patients refer you to me?" This will force an answer without giving offence, and the character of this answer will readily determine the dentist in his subsequent management of the case. If the answer is too non-committal and unsatisfactory, the dentist should not hesitate to say in a kindly, gentlemanly manner that it is customary in his practice to have some kind of

reference before doing work for strangers,—except so far as it relates to the relief of pain. It is of course understood, or at least it should be, that if an individual is suffering it is the duty of the dentist at any or all times to relieve the pain with absolute disregard to the credit of the patient; but with anything further than this he is perfectly justified in making an issue. No individual of any intelligence will resent a statement of this sort if properly put, and any patient who does take offence is better under the patronage of some other dentist who cares more for the number of patients he gets than he does for conducting a profitable and equitable practice.

If a stranger applies under the recommendation of a patient whose own credit is not of the best, it is well to look personally into the standing of the new patient. Usually "birds of a feather flock together," but the rule is not invariable, and it so chances on occasion that a very undesirable patient will send one who is in all ways satisfactory. The whole question resolves itself back to the recommendation already made, for the dentist to become a close student of human nature. In some instances the most acute

observer will be deceived and will be led to bestow his confidence where it is not deserved, but in general the man who studies humanity closely will soon learn to detect the imposters when they apply to him.

In cases where a patient comes on the implied recommendation of another patient who is reliable, and yet there exists a doubt in the mind of the practitioner as to the stranger's integrity, it is always best to inform himself by an appeal to the individual who gives the recommendation. This is sometimes a delicate matter and requires considerable tact, but there is always a way of doing it without embarrassment if the practitioner only studies the situation. It may simply be necessary to drop a note of thanks, expressing the appreciation of the practitioner for having recommended Mr. So-and-so. This is always proper in any event, and particularly so if the individual who sends the new patient is a professional man. This note of thanks opens the way at once for an exposure of the fraud in case the new-comer has used the other's name without warrant, as sometimes occurs. But the circumstances may be such in certain instances that the

practitioner feels he must have definite information regarding the standing of the patient making application for work, and under these conditions a letter something like the following may be sent in those instances where it is not convenient to see personally the party who recommends the patient:

"My Dear Sir: Mr. So-and-so has just applied to me for dental service, giving your name as reference. It sometimes happens that the names of very worthy people are used in this connection by individuals who are not altogether responsible and who have no warrant for such use, and I accordingly venture to ask what you know as to the standing of the gentleman in question. I need not assure you that any information you may give me will be held in the strictest confidence, and I also beg to thank you in advance for the favor. I enclose a stamp for answer.

"Yours very truly,

"_____"

But sometimes conditions arise in which the practitioner must use his own judgment and

abide by the consequences. As has been stated, the best of observers will be deceived at times, and the only thing to do under such circumstances is to accept the situation philosophically and not waste time or energy in crying over the proverbial "spilt milk."

It will not always do to depend solely on appearances in judging character, as was once very forcibly illustrated by a prominent practitioner in a manner the details of which are so very good that they must be related.

The practitioner in question had arrived at a point in his practice where he was eminently satisfied, with one small exception. Said he to a friend one day: "I have all the patients I want now, in fact more than I can attend to; but there is one family in this State that I particularly desire to have as patients, and to whom I believe I am entitled. I have many of their friends, and for a long time I have been anxious to secure them, but for some reason I have never been able to. That is the governor's family. If I had them I should be perfectly happy so far as my practice is concerned."

Some time later, as the practitioner was in

the midst of an operation one day, he was called to the reception-room and met there a small, very plainly-dressed, and altogether unobtrusive individual, who said he wished some dental work done. The practitioner scrutinized him a moment and concluded that he would not make a very desirable patient, so he excused himself on the basis of being busy, and finally referred him in a bland manner to a fellow-practitioner across the hall for whom he had no very particular liking.

In a few days he met the friend again, and his first salutation was to congratulate the dentist on securing the governor as a patient. The practitioner looked at him blankly a moment, and then said: "I don't know what you mean. The governor has never been to me."

"But I know he has," protested the friend. "I sent him to you myself, and in fact he went direct from my office to yours."

The practitioner thought a moment, and then said: "Describe him. I never remember having seen the governor."

When his friend had finished describing the governor, the practitioner was pacing the floor,

smiting the air, and—— But his remarks will not permit of reproduction in print. Appearances are sometimes deceptive, and this should be borne in mind in judging the probable responsibilities of a new patient who applies for service. It is never safe to wholly condemn a man till you know him, any more than it is to implicitly trust a stranger without some kind of reference.

Collecting Accounts.—For a practitioner to be a poor collector of accounts is to work an injustice not only on himself and his family but on the people whom he credits. It is demoralizing in every way and to all concerned to establish a habit of laxity and irresponsibility in regard to the just payment of obligations, and each individual in a community with the standing that a professional man usually has owes it as a duty to those about him to maintain integrity in this respect to the extent of his ability. If a patient accepts professional services and then is allowed to dally along indefinitely without paying for them, he is quite likely to lose any appreciation he may ever have had for the value of them, and eventually ends in losing respect for the practitioner. The longer an account runs

the more difficult it becomes to collect it, and the lapse of time invariably lessens the debtor's sense of his obligation. Another particular feature of the case relates to the loss of patronage a practitioner often sustains by letting accounts run. If a patient owes a dentist a bill and subsequently finds that more work is needed, it is the rarest thing for the patient to apply to the same dentist for the service. On account of that long-standing bill another dentist is sought out, and if he chances to be a good collector, his bill is often paid readily while the first dentist is left to sigh for his money.

As to the frequency with which bills should be rendered the dentist must be governed somewhat by the usages of the locality in which he practices, but ordinarily an account should be rendered on the first of the month following the completion of the work, and if not paid, should be rendered monthly after that. When a bill has been sent the second or third time in this way without response, the patient's attention should be called to the matter either by a carefully-worded and polite letter or by a tactful collector. Usually, if the dentist has an assistant, it is best

to have the assistant call in preference to a professional collector, as this is less likely to be resented. Unless there is some satisfactory explanation of the delay, there should be little let up on the patient till a settlement is forced in some way. There is a trite saying that "it takes all kinds of people to make a world," and in the collection of accounts it is equally true that it takes all kinds of expedients to work success. The dentist should study the temperament of his patient and should aim to appeal to him at his vulnerable point. Sometimes, though not very often, it may be advisable to enter proceedings in court to force the payment of an account, but in a general way this method is productive of more bother and worry to the dentist than the results will warrant.

In any event, where there has ever been difficulty in collecting an account from a patient, unless there seems some good reason for it which is satisfactory to the dentist, no future appointment should ever be given without a definite understanding in regard to payment. Let the patient see that you do not think lightly of deferred obligations, and the impression will soon

get out that you are not to be trifled with by irresponsible people.

Of course the dentist should not so demean himself as to give rise to the idea that he is a hard-hearted money-grabber and absolutely callous to the sensibilities of his patients. He must be a gentleman above all things, and in every instance where he finds it necessary to be stringent in his demands he must temper his severity with the strictest adherence to principle and the most beneficent administration of justice. In no case should he ever be caught doing so base a thing as to persecute for money's sake any poor or unfortunate individual who through force of circumstances has found himself indebted to him. While he administers his affairs with business-like promptness, he should never ignore the behests of a common humanity nor fail to extend charity where charity is indicated.

Form of Bill-Heads and Manner of Making Out Accounts.—It is a matter of some consequence in the smooth running of a practice to know how best to render accounts. It should no longer be considered necessary nor in good taste for a professional man to put down every

item of service on a bill when it is being rendered, the same as the grocer or dry-goods man. Professional service is something distinct from trade or barter, and everything smacking of trade in the conduct of a practice should be discountenanced. Professional men should so deport themselves that the word professionalism shall stand synonymous with honor, and to-day it would have been so considered had they always lived up to their highest possibilities. But unfortunately there have been rogues in the professions as well as in other callings, so that it is difficult to conduct a professional practice along lines strictly in keeping with the best traditions of the craft. And yet every practitioner owes it to his profession to so manage his affairs that the public is made to realize the difference between the ethics of professionalism and the ethics of trade, and this can often be done by the manner of rendering professional bills.

The style of the bill-head should be plain, neat, and typographically perfect. No flourishing head- or tail-pieces or borders should ever be used. In size they should be simply large enough so that when folded once they will conveniently

go into an ordinary envelope. They should be made of good, substantial paper, the difference in cost between good paper and poor paper being so trifling as not to enter seriously into the case when the maintenance of a high professional standing is considered. Economy in these particulars on the part of a professional man is always prejudicial with the most desirable class of patronage.

The bill should be made out simply "For professional services," and with patients who have a due regard for the dentist's honor and confidence in his integrity this is all that is necessary. But to avoid any possible misunderstanding, it is always best to have a printed foot-note on the bill-head as indicated in the illustration on page 119.

One reason why it is unsatisfactory to itemize an account is because it frequently becomes necessary to charge twice as much for one filling as for another of the same material, and the lay mind cannot always see the signficance of this without a verbal explanation. In fact there are many apparent discrepancies in the items of an ordinary dental bill which might cause needless

CHICAGO, _____ 190____

M _____

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To G. H. BLANK, D.D.S., DR.

85 STATE STREET.

FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.

RECEIVED PAYMENT.

A diagram is made of every operation. This, with a detailed statement of all accounts, is kept at the office, where the patient may examine it at any time.

dissatisfaction, and so it is best to render the account "For professional services." But there are very many worthy individuals whose education and experience in professional matters have not progressed far enough to enable them to accept such a bill without considering it arbitrary and high-handed. They want to know something more about the service they are paying for, and it is for the benefit of these people that the foot-note is printed. It at once disarms suspicion, and if for no other reason than this, the keeping of diagram records is a very profitable procedure.

In cases where work is done for the various members of a family, and the bills are sent to the head of the family, it is well, in view of the fact that he is not supposed to know the amount of service rendered to each member, to indicate this on the bill. Every precaution should be taken in rendering an account to disarm possible criticism in advance, and this is particularly true in dealing with new patients. After patients have been coming for some time and have become accustomed to the dentist's methods, and have gained confidence in him, he can take

greater latitude without misunderstandings, but he should make sure of his ground at every step. A bill such as just indicated may be made out in the manner shown on page 122.

A discriminating practitioner will soon learn by his experience with the individuals who come under his care just how to approach them with bills to the best advantage, and if he makes this matter a study he will eventually be able to conduct this department of his practice with very little friction. But in order to accomplish this he must first establish a reputation for absolute honesty in all his professional dealings. With this as a basis he need have no fear of contention; and if contention does occasionally arise, he can face the result with perfect confidence that whichever way the issue goes he will have no compunction of conscience in the matter and nothing of serious import to grieve over. But unless he is fundamentally honest he will never have any assurance against suspicion, and no real resource to fall back upon in case of contention. If men were far-sighted enough to see the results of doubtful dealing, surely all men would be honest for policy's sake if for nothing else.

CHICAGO, *Dec. 1st* 190*2*

M*r. Z. Y. Yonge,*

1050 Maple Street.

To G. H. BLANK, D.D.S., Dr.

85 State Street.

For Professional Services.

Miss Katie, 3 gold fillings, 1 amalgam filling,	*$21*
Master George, 5 gold fillings, 1 crown, cleaning teeth,	*58*
Miss Blanche, Regulating teeth, Feb. 3d to Nov. 17th	*175*
	$254

Received Payment.

A diagram is made of every operation. This, with a detailed statement of all accounts, is kept at the office, where the patient may examine it at any time.

Paying Bills.—In intimate conjunction with the close collection of acounts must go the prompt payment of bills. No dentist of any self-respect will ignore his business obligations to the extent of gaining the reputation for being poor pay. Carelessness in this respect is almost criminal, and in a profession like dentistry, where the invested capital is small and the obligations not necessarily large or numerous, it is inexcusable to form the habit of not paying legitimate bills. It is usually not of necessity that dentists are poor pay, but merely because their business methods are lax generally and because they allow themselves to drift into shiftless and irresponsible habits.

A legitimate business obligation should be held as binding and as sacred as any other obligation in life; and if a man plans his affairs properly, it is as easy to pay a bill at one time as another. It is largely a matter of habit and self-discipline. Many a man who is not at heart dishonest carelessly allows himself to get behind, and, through sheer lack of decision and self-restraint lets matters drift along month after month and year after year till it all ends in a

total loss of credit, and then such a man wonders why the world is hard on him.

The desire to have things without the ability to pay for them is a disease which when chronic becomes as fatal to the ultimate self-respect and happiness of the individual as does tuberculosis to his physical system. Many of the things we buy in our modern civilization are luxuries instead of necessities, and while it is true that in the constant change of customs and tastes the luxuries of yesterday seem to become the necessities of to-day, it is yet a fact that many of the items of expenditure in the life of the average individual are wholly unnecessary. It is well and proper for a man to have some of the luxuries and to indulge his taste for the sublime and the refined in the modern amenities of life, but it is not well, neither is it proper, to do this until he can afford it. To indulge in luxuries at the expense of one's business credit and reputation and to buy luxuries that one is not certain of paying for is equivalent to downright dishonesty.

Let the young man starting out in life be cautious about contracting bills, and particularly

in those cases where there is the slightest doubt about his ability to pay. Let him look ahead very carefully, and if there is not in his mind a positive assurance that he can meet his bills when due, let him resolutely deprive himself of the things he otherwise would buy and wait till his circumstances so change that he will be justified in the purchase. There is nothing so discouraging or disheartening to a young man as to have a load of debts hanging over him. It may be necessary under certain circumstances, in fact it frequently does become necessary with a young dentist starting out in practice, to go in debt for his equipment, but it should be his constant aim backed by the closest economy to discharge the obligation as early as possible and get even with the world. To be out of debt and able to look every man in the face is a wonderful satisfaction to any right thinking individual, but for a young dentist to attempt to conduct a practice with the collector calling at his office every few days is to travel an uphill road filled with rolling stones and paved with briars. It is not within his power to do the best service for his patients while he is harrassed by debts.

To gain a reputation in the community for the prompt payment of accounts establishes a man's credit and adds immeasurably to his self-respect. A man under these circumstances can confidently ask for credit in time of need, and people are only too glad to accommodate him. There is so much innate goodness in humanity even in business relations that there is never lacking the desire to help those who attempt to help themselves, and the surest way to gain friends is to prove one's self worthy of them.

IX

FEES

THERE are two principal plans for arranging fees in a dental practice,—by the hour or by the operation,—and there are arguments for and against each. To charge wholly by the hour is in some respects an equitable arrangement, but there are objections to it as an invariable practice. It is true that a dentist's time is his chief stock in trade, but it is also true that his expenditure of energy is an important element in the case, and there are some operations which tax a practitioner far more than others. To have a set fee then for each hour's work is not just to the operator, and to have a sliding scale according to the character of the operation is practically charging by the operation. Then again, while as a professional proposition the cost of material should never enter into consideration in arranging fees for professional service, yet it is undeniable that in some cases it

becomes a factor. For instance, the difference between an hour spent in removing deposits and polishing teeth and one spent in condensing gold in a cavity would amount to something in the way of actual cost, to say nothing of the difference in nervous tension. To work by the hour is to be constantly watching the clock, particularly if the operator is conscientious and has his patient's interest at heart, and there is always a feeling that he is working on time which belongs to somebody else instead of himself. Any diversion from the real work in hand or any interruption in an operation seems so much of a direct robbery of the patient, and this fact always being prominent in an operator's mind, makes him more or less a slave to his surroundings. Another inequitable feature about the case is the fact that no operator is able to give uniformly good service at all times. There are days when he is not up to the mark and when matters move slowly despite his best effort, and there are other days when he is in the highest perfection of physical, mental, and nervous balance, so that he is able to accomplish twice the work in a given time that he can on other

occasions. To charge the same fee per hour for service rendered on two days so different in accomplishment is not equitable, and an operator cannot well say to a patient: "I am not in condition to-day to do the class of service I ordinarily do, and so I must not charge you my regular fee," neither can he say: "I am feeling so well to-day that I must charge you more than ordinarily."

A fee should be based on the amount of accomplishment more than on anything else, and this fact also illustrates a frequent injustice where, on the other hand, charges are made solely by the operation. To charge a set fee, for instance, for an amalgam filling is wholly wrong, because it may require three or four times as long to insert one amalgam filling as it does another, and the limit of accomplishment in the one case is vastly different from the other. The element of time in an operation cannot therefore by any means be ignored, and the most equitable arrangement is to have a combination of the two systems of charging. There should be a minimum fee for each kind of operation, and the charges should run upward from this minimum

according to the time and energy required in its performance.

As to the size of an operator's fees the matter must of course be regulated to some extent by the customs in vogue in the locality where he practises. It is suicidal in every particular to make one's fees lower than the regulation fees of the neighborhood, as it is also usually injudicious to make them very much higher. This applies more particularly to practices in smaller towns, where an operator's fees are a matter of common gossip and where the precise fee for a given operation becomes well known. If an operator varies in any way from the regulation fees, it is always safer to raise the fees than to lower them. This may seem a strange statement, and yet it is amply borne out by observation. If a man's fees are lower than his neighbor's, there is always a suspicion that he is not so capable a practitioner, and invariably the cheap man draws around him a class of practice which at best is very undesirable. He gets the shoppers and the misers and the financially irresponsible. His is the patronage of the "great unwashed."

To establish in a neighborhood the reputation of being the highest-priced dentist in the place is often a sheet-anchor of strength. It may drive some people away, but if the fees are at all within reason it will not drive very many worthy people away, and for one such who leaves a dozen others will come. In fact it is the very rarest thing imaginable for a dentist who is capable of giving good service to ever lose his patronage on account of high fees. Of course he must be sufficiently skilled to justify himself in charging well, and he must have some sense of honor in making his charges; but where there is one dentist who has failed on account of high fees there are ninety-and-nine who have failed from other causes. In many instances high fees are made the scape-goat of a man's failure when the real cause was something else. The mere fact of demanding and maintaining good fees tends to establish confidence in a man and draws to him the most desirable people.

When a young man starts out in practice, particularly if it is in a large city where fees vary greatly among practitioners, he cannot expect to get as high fees as the older and better estab-

lished practitioners; but as he gains patronage and experience he should gradually raise his fees till he gets them up as far as his capabilities will justify. To do this requires some tact and judgment. It will not do to make too prominent a display of the fact that his fees are being raised. He should quietly go about it, stiffening up here a little and there a little, and from time to time as the opportunity seems propitious he should advance his minimum fees till the volume of his income is perceptibly increased. In this way his practice will gradually undergo a process of evolution without any serious protest on the part of his patients, but with an ultimate weeding out of undesirable patronage and the establishment of an adequately remunerative fee system.

Estimating Work. — In some instances patients make a request to have the cost of their work estimated in advance, and while this seems to them a perfectly legitimate and natural thing to ask, it is in many cases a very difficult matter to comply with it, and under certain circumstances the request is wholly unreasonable. It is often quite impossible to predict by a mere examination of the teeth the extent of service

it will require to put them in a healthy condition, and the patient might with equal propriety ask a physician what he would charge to carry him through a case of illness where the exact nature of the disease was unknown. This feature of the case should be fully explained to patients, and most individuals will instantly recognize the situation and see the justice of the dentist's contention. And yet it is necessary for patients in many of the exigencies of life to know something of the obligations they are about to assume, and the dentist should give them as accurate an idea as he can. In estimating work in this way the operator should invariably explain the contingencies of the case to the patient and should emphasize the fact that it is only an opinion he is giving as to the probable cost and not an agreement to perform the service for a stated amount. Anything in the way of bargaining over a dental fee should be frowned upon by a self-respecting practitioner, and yet this has no reference to a cordial consideration of the question of cost with a worthy but impecunious patient. With those who are so situated in life that they are obliged to plan

their expenditures in advance it is well to estimate work by placing the probable cost between two sums, — a minimum and a maximum amount,—with considerabile leeway between the two to allow for discrepancies of judgment.

But while it is ordinarily best—as has been intimated—to avoid giving estimates on work in advance, it is occasionally the case that the dentist may wish to force a consideration of fees on the patient before the work is undertaken. Sometimes irresponsible people, or those who may not be familiar with the dentist's fees, make appointments for work without sufficiently considering the obligations they are assuming, and with such individuals it is always well to have some sort of understanding. The time to bring this about is, as has already been stated, when the examination of the teeth is made at the first sitting. A little precaution in this respect will frequently avoid subsequent complications and unpleasantness.

Other instances where it is sometimes well to broach the subject of fees before the work is begun is where a child or ward is sent to the dentist by a father or guardian and the mouth is

found in a much worse condition than has been suspected, and also in those cases where the previous dentist has been one whose fees are very low. Under either of these circumstances the amount of the bill may be much greater than had been anticipated, and there is likely to be disappointment and sometimes even serious dissatisfaction when it is rendered. In such cases it is well to drop a polite note to the father or guardian informing him of the condition of the teeth and stating that the practitioner deems it a duty to him to apprise him of the facts before doing the work.

One of the greatest abominations connected with obtaining legitimate fees is to have patients come from a man whose fees are notoriously low, and whose patients are therefore not educated to a just appreciation of the value of dental service. When a responsible practitioner gets a patient under these conditions he must exercise rare judgment and tact and see that the patient is by some means made to understand what his fees are in advance. Precautions of this sort often protect the dentist against charges of extortion and dishonesty.

Disputes Over Fees. — But it occasionally arises in the conduct of a full practice that difficulties occur in adjusting fees, and patients sometimes dispute a bill or complain of its size. The only safe way for a dentist to avoid trouble of this sort is to be perfectly equitable and just in his charges at all times, and then if a contention arises he is in a position to say to the patient that his bill is in strict accordance with his regular fees. If the patient still persists in complaining, it is in order for the dentist to take the ground in a gentlemanly and courteous manner that it is his province and not that of the patient to set an estimate upon his services, and that while people are not obliged to patronize him, when they do come they must let him say what his services are worth. Above all things he should talk reasonably and good-humoredly to the patient and never allow himself to give way to ill temper. The moment a man gets angry or the least bit abusive he jeopardizes his case and loses his advantage, besides branding himself as a man unworthy to be classed as a professional gentleman. If patients are so ignorant or overbearing that they will not

listen to reason or explanation, it is better for the dentist to excuse himself from their presence and refuse to have anything further to do with them. It is better even to lose a bill entirely than to stoop to an unseemly quarrel. Make it a rule with patients and let them so understand it that you will have no contention over accounts, and when this is well established as a tenet of your professional faith you will have little cause for contention. Not only this, but it will be found that in the course of a year there will actually be fewer accounts lost by pursuing this plan than by continually combating people.

The Ideal Status of the Fee Question.—But in the broadest consideration of fees and the best means of regulating them the whole matter sifts itself down to the fact that the ideal condition in the conduct of a practice is where fees are never discussed at all. To be continually talking fees to patients is degrading and smacks too much of commercialism. It emphasizes the sordid side of life and does not comport with the dignity of true professionalism. There should be eventually established between patient and operator such a stable confidence and such a com-

munity of interest that it is never necessary with long-standing patients to mention the subject of fees from one year's end to another, and this very condition can be largely brought about if the operator sets himself to work along that line as he is building up his practice. But it cannot be wholly accomplished at the outset nor till the practitioner has demonstrated his integrity to the satisfaction of patients and established a firm conviction in their minds that he can be depended upon for equity in all his dealings. When this has once been attained, patients simply come and have their work done, say nothing about fees, and expect a bill on the first of the following month. A check is then mailed to the dentist, who receipts the bill, or has his book-keeper do it, and returns it to the patient, when the financial part of that transaction is forever closed. To maintain a practice on this basis is the acme of professional success so far as relates to the material aspects of the comity between patient and practitioner, and such a condition leaves the dentist's mind free from the baser influence of financial bickering and gives ample opportunity for the closest possible attention to the higher

development of his professional skill. It is not only better in a financial way, but better mentally and morally in fostering the loftier impulses of honor and confidence and placing human intercourse on a more exalted plane of mutual equity and harmony.

Charity Work.—In the exigencies of professional life it becomes the duty of every practitioner of dentistry to do more or less charity work, and this should be most cheerfully done whenever the merits of the case warrant it. When it comes to the relief of pain the question should never arise as to the patient's ability to pay. There are many unfortunate circumstances occurring in the lives of individuals which frequently throw them on the mercy of others, and when reverses happen among his patients the dentist should never be remiss in his duty so far as exercising charity is concerned. He should adopt the golden rule in this matter as in other affairs of life.

But there is another side to the question which must be faced with resolution and carried out with judgment. The dentist should have a care that he does not do more harm than good with

his charity. In anything he does beyond the mere relief of pain for a patient he should first make certain that the object of his charity is worthy, and even then he should not carry his benevolence too far. This is not so much because of imposition on himself as for the possible injury to the object of his charity. There is nothing in all human experience more demoralizing to an individual than to voluntarily accept unlimited charity, and the moment a man holds out his hand and receives aid from another without return that moment he sinks in his own self-esteem and loses an appreciable segment of his character. With all the laudable intentions behind our various systems of charity to-day, it is fast becoming evident to thoughtful people that more injury than good is being done by them. Many of them are merely helping to create a pauper class and are making people irresponsible and dependent who otherwise would develop some self-reliance. After giving a man a certain amount of aid in time of need he should be thrown on his own resources in order to bring out the best there is in him. Those who aim to be the best of friends to man are often led

through mistaken charity to be his worst enemies. Reach down your hand willingly to lift up a fallen brother, but when he is once firmly set upon his feet let him stand alone.

Guaranteeing Work.—The request is sometimes made by patients to have their work guaranteed. This, as every practitioner knows, is an unreasonable request, and the only guarantee a dentist should ever give is to guarantee that he will do the very best he knows how for the patient's welfare. He may say to the patient, and in fact he should say, that if his operations fail through any fault of his he will cheerfully make the failure good. But he should never under any circumstances guarantee, for instance, that fillings will remain in for a certain number of years nor that a set of artificial teeth will wear a given time. Unless a patient has sufficient confidence in a dentist to know that he will remedy any defect in his work without a guarantee, the attitude of the patient to the practitioner is not such as to make their professional relationship harmonious and satisfactory, and they are better apart. A physician might with almost equal propriety be asked to guarantee that when he has

once cured a patient of an illness the patient will never get ill again, as to ask a dentist to guarantee his work; and no practitioner who is honest will ever be led to do so unreasonable a thing.

X

EMPLOYING AN ASSISTANT

In the conduct of a practice which is at all extensive the dentist will consult his best interests by employing a young lady assistant. No office is ever kept in quite the pink of perfection without the ministrations of a feminine mind to supervise its care and smooth over the rough excrescences left upon it by the average male habitant. There are so many useful services for the assistant in a dental office that an operator who has once employed one will never be found without her. She stands between him and many of the petty annoyances which would otherwise fall to his lot. She saves nearly one-half of his time by dexterously assisting him in his operations and by attending to the clerical work, such as making appointments, notifying patients to come for examinations, keeping books and records, sending bills, and the hundred and one little routine details of an office practice. She

protects him from the ubiquitous book-agent and the perennial life-insurance man. She accepts the blame many times when he is himself at fault, and to have some one to do this is most delightful. She remembers things that he forgets and attends to all his memoranda. She looks after the linen of the office and keeps the instruments cleaned and sterilized.

In fact to have a competent assistant is to relieve one's self of many of the small cares of conducting an office, and no man in full practice can afford to do without one. It is economy in every way, financial, physical, and mental.

XI

ECONOMY IN PURCHASE AND IN AVOIDING WASTE

Purchasing Instruments and Supplies.—If all the folly of dentists in purchasing material they do not need were represented by an aggregation of the stuff so bought it would create a pile that would reach to the moon, and if another pile were made of the material they should buy but do not it would reach equally high. This might be construed into an intimation that they do not always use good judgment in their purchases, and an examination of the average dental office will amply corroborate the inference. It is seldom that one sees an office which is too well equipped, but it is quite common to see offices sadly lacking in the essentials and strewn about and lumbered up with a mass of material of no practical utility. A certain amount of such accumulation seems inevitable in years of experience, as it is impossible for a dentist to judge accu-

rately with regard to the probable utility of every instrument or appliance he examines, but that a man may come much nearer it than most dentists do is certain. The young dentist in particular should form the habit of studying carefully the instruments he buys, and should ordinarily see a practical test of every instrument or appliance before he purchases it. This plan of procedure will not only save him many dollars in the course of a year but it is really of great advantage to the dealer who sells him his supplies. To purchase an instrument that proves ineffective in the buyer's hands is to create disaffection, and it frequently brings about the request to have the instrument exchanged for something else. This is always unsatisfactory to the dealer, because of the accumulation of second-hand material for which there is very little market. The irresponsibility of dentists in not knowing just what they want and in purchasing what they do not need is proverbial in our supply-houses, and the evil is so great to all concerned that it should be remedied if possible. The dealer is not in a position to remedy it, because he cannot predict whether a certain appli-

ance will appeal to a given operator or not. There is a great variation among men as to their adaptability to instruments, and one operator may find an instrument invaluable to him in his work while another will pronounce it useless. No one can judge of this matter but the individual himself, and it is high time that dentists made a more discriminating study in regard to the purchase of their supplies.

This does not infer that they shall be niggardly or penurious about their equipment. No man can serve his patrons in the highest degree of excellence without having the necessary appurtenances to do it with, and it is economy both of time and patience to have the most perfect equipment. A well-appointed dental office appeals to patients and inspires a certain amount of respect, while it gives the operator a greater degree of confidence and satisfaction.

A consideration of this question cannot be complete without a word as to the paying of bills for supplies. There is altogether too much laxity among dentists in regard to obligations of this sort, and it is a serious reflection on the profession as a whole that many practitioners

shirk responsibility in this particular as long as possible. They seem to imagine that because the dealers make their living on the patronage of dentists, the latter are thereby privileged to take all sorts of liberties and ask for all sorts of favors. Some of them accept it as almost an affront to have a regular monthly bill presented to them, and if a draft is made for a long overdue account it is construed as the very acme of imperiousness and high-handed usurpation. They forget that business is business and that dealers are simply business-men with business methods.

It must of course be taken for granted that this imputation does not by any means apply to all dentists. There are many in the profession who pay their bills promptly and are in no wise open to the charge of irresponsibility; and even with those who are derelict it is many times the case that it is due more to carelessness and procrastination than to any real desire to escape their just obligations. But the legitimate way is to pay bills when due, or rather the best way of all is to have no bills to pay. The cash buyer is always at an advantage over the one who asks

credit, and in dealing with dental-supply houses an appreciable saving may be made. Most houses have a rule that by depositing ninety dollars with them the depositor is given credit for one hundred dollars' worth of supplies to be obtained from time to time as the dentist requires them, and there is no rate of percentage that pays better than this. It is a profitable arrangement in every way, and with responsible houses it is a perfectly safe one. As soon as a dentist begins to take advantage of this offer his relations with that particular house may be said to be on a very satisfactory basis, and if any favors are to be shown in the courtesies of commercial relationship he is most certain to be the one to receive them.

Avoiding Waste. — In a world where the genius of a man is constantly being taxed to utilize the by-products of civilization there should be a universal sentiment against undue waste, and in the commercial world this is true. The waste of yesterday becomes the staple article of commerce to-day, and fortunes have been made and saved by preserving the rejected. In the practice of dentistry, where the precious metals

are largely used, an operator may gain much in the course of a year by carefully saving the dust and scraps. Little particles of gold falling to the floor during the operation of filling should be picked up and kept in a bottle. Disks or strips used in finishing gold fillings should be preserved and sent to the refiner. The platinum pins in broken teeth, the dust from the lathe in grinding gold crowns, bridges, or plates, all of them should be carefully gathered and saved. It requires little time to do this, and the aggregate of accumulation from this source in a lifetime of practice would make the average man independent. It is never well to be penurious about anything, but it is always well to be saving, and if all the wanton waste of the world were carefully utilized there would never be the need for deprivation.

XII

BANK ACCOUNT AND INVESTMENTS

A YOUNG man should establish a bank account as early in his career as possible. The moment he gets a few dollars ahead he should put it in a good bank, and so far as convenient he should pay his bills by check. It creates a favorable impression in the community and gives him a more stable standing. Besides this, a check paid for a bill and duly endorsed is a receipt, and the cancelled checks accumulating month after month are a vivid object-lesson and a constant reminder of his expenditures. He has more confidence in himself when he has a balance in the bank, and it gives him a greater incentive to save. If he has much currency in his pocket there is always the temptation to spend it for anything which may catch his eye, but if his money is in the bank he is likely to think twice before drawing on it. A bank account brings him in contact with business people and

establishes a relationship which is frequently advantageous to him in the way of profitable investments by the time he has a sufficient accumulation to seek investment.

This matter of investing one's earnings profitably is a very important consideration for the professional man and should be studied with the same care that is given to other material factors of life. A man's professional usefulness does not continue unabated to old age, and unless he saves something in his palmy days he is likely to face want in his declining years. There is no more pathetic spectacle than an old, broken-down, penniless dentist, worn out by years of service at the chair or the bench, his patients slipping away one by one, till finally the last loyal patron seems to have abandoned him for a younger man, and he left with nothing but regrets, to face a meagre existence eked out by charity. That this has been the lot of many a practitioner who in his day was capable and active is only too apparent, and it should prove an object-lesson for the young men of the hour to so shape their affairs that when the hand begins to lose its cunning and the brain to be less

alert they will have something laid away to ensure their independence. How doubly sweet it is for an old man to be able to dispense charity in his latter years instead of being obliged to accept it.

As to the kind of investments suitable for a professional man he must be governed largely by the nature of his surroundings, and no explicit advice can be given; but there is one feature of the case that every young man should be warned against. The frantic craze to become suddenly rich has wrecked more men than any other one factor of commercial life, and the tendency for speculation is largely backed by this desire. It is the most alluring of all phantasies, and there is little wonder that young men fall by the thousands in its pursuit. The young professional man, of all others, should avoid this siren. Even if speculating were a profitable and legitimate procedure he is not so situated that he can expect to excel at it. When men who are constantly studying the stock exchange and the grain market frequently find themselves on the losing side, how can a young man who never gets more than the merest occasional glimpse of

the inside expect to speculate successfully? The moment a young professional man begins playing the stock exchange or the wheat pit on margins, that moment he begins to lose a grip on his practice. A speculative procedure diverts attention from professional matters and unfits a man for the closest possible attention to his work.

There are of course exceptions to every rule, but it is the rarest thing imaginable for an outsider to ever make a competence in speculation, and if the vast sums of money put into speculation by professional men were placed beside the amounts they have made thereby, the former would bury the latter so deep that it could never be detected.

One thing in particular needs special emphasis. In these days of "get-rich-quick" schemes many an alluring bait is dangled in front of the young professional man who has accumulated a few dollars. Promoters of all sorts lie in wait for him, and the ingenuity of their attack is beyond comprehension. They frequently come with the ostensible recommendation of reputable people, and they never hesi-

tate to use names without warrant. Their plans are as wily and varied as the wit of man, and to resist them sometimes requires rare determination and self-control. But it is a safe prediction that if a young man invests in any of these schemes,—whether it be a gold mine, an oil well, a plantation, a new manufacturing venture, or any other project over which he cannot have direct supervision—he will lose nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand. And the pathetic thing is that the average professional man is so gullible that he is marked at once by questionable promoters who make him their particular prey. The wreck of many a professional man's life may be traced to the alluring wiles of these men who sell stock in worthless concerns, and in other instances to foolish investments in concerns launched by men of good intent but lacking in business acumen.

A safe plan is for the professional man to select an adviser in the form of a banker or business man in his investments and abide by his judgment. It is as logical for him to consult an expert in investments when he wishes to place his savings as it is for the banker or business

man to consult a dentist when he wishes to have his teeth cared for. The only requisite in either instance is that the adviser shall be competent and honest. In this way the dentist may make investments in safe and legitimate securities and guard against the cruel waste of his earnings.

The young man should studiously avoid all the myriad glittering schemes for making money rapidly, and should content himself with slower but safer investments. First mortgages or good bonds are preferable to flyers on the Board of Trade, and a safe dividend-paying stock bought outright and placed in the vault will beat a margin speculation nine times out of ten. Of course interest on mortgages or bonds is not high, but it is one of the most marvellous things in all business experience to watch how interest will accumulate as the months and years go on. A few hundred dollars put out at interest each year during the time of a man's greatest earning capacity will secure him a competence when he is old. The dentists to-day who are independent are for the most part men who have saved little by little and invested it safely, rather than those who have speculated.

XIII

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP

No consideration of a dentist's success in life would be complete without reference to his professional relationship and his status as a citizen. To be successful in the truest sense of the word a dentist must have intimate association and the most cordial relations with his fellow-practitioners. Whatever else he may get out of life in the way of money or friends there is always a void unless he numbers among his most intimate associates the members of his craft. There is something wonderfully sustaining in the true friendship of those working along similar lines, and it is perfectly natural that a mutual interest should develop between the members of a common profession. He who holds himself aloof from this kind of association misses much in life in the way of enjoyment and professional progress. No man can advance as rapidly alone as he can by the aid of those interested in the same

pursuits, and when a man refuses to fraternize with others of his profession he injures himself more than any one else. Everything pertaining to professional welfare should have his hearty support and loyal endorsement. To hang back and be an odd sheep brands him at once as being possessed of qualities that are undesirable, and this judgment is passed on him not only by the profession but by the public at large. There is nothing more unprofitable than a self-imposed ostracism.

The dentist should join the various dental societies of his locality and take an active interest in their welfare. He should write papers for them and should contribute to the periodical literature of his profession. He may not be able to write a brilliant paper, but every man has it in him to say something that shall be of benefit to his fellow-practitioners, and he has no right to withhold it. And even if he cannot write, he can be useful in other ways and thus leave his impress on the profession in such a manner that he will be a distinct personality instead of a nonentity. In short, he should consider himself part and parcel of the profession and not a mere

excrescence waiting to be wiped off by the breath of progress.

Not only this, but he should take a vital interest in affairs aside from the profession. A man who wraps himself up in any one pursuit and thinks of nothing else is prone to become narrow-minded and self-opinioned, and in all human relations there is no one more illiberal than a narrow-minded dentist. If a dentist is at all active in mind he needs some outside interest or some fad as a diversion from the grind of professional life, and if he is not active, he needs it all the more to create activity. He should aim to be broad in his sympathies and his interests, and should remember that he is a man first and a dentist afterwards.

This involves the obligation of good citizenship, and to be a good citizen is to take cognizance of public affairs. It means that the individual should vote at all municipal, State, or national elections, and in order to vote intelligently he should make himself familiar with the leading questions of the day. This does not imply that he shall be offensively obtrusive with his political beliefs nor that he shall consort with

ward-heelers or unworthy politicians, but that he shall look upon it as a duty to take an interest in the proper administration of government and to lend his aid towards the election of worthy officials for this purpose.

To sum up the factors which enter into the making of a successful dentist, a man should not only develop his professional attainments to the highest state of perfection, but he must aim to provide for those dependent upon him by strict adherence to a sound financial policy in the conduct of his affairs, and in addition he must hold true to his obligations to the profession of his choice and to the commonwealth in which he lives. A dentist who fulfils these requirements to the best of his ability may be considered to have attained all in a material way which his particular lot in life permits of him, and of such a man it can never be truly said that he has lived altogether in vain.

THE END

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