

But, after all these considerations are stated, I am strongly inclined to the belief that the greatest of all causes leading to the wholesale use of imported chinaware in the mouths of our patrons has yet to be mentioned. I may be treading on delicate ground, but I take the step boldly because I believe my impression to be correct. It is my conviction that much of the indifference manifested by the people in regard to saving the natural teeth is born of the fact, that failure has too often followed an honest attempt on their part to save them. In other words, our profession has not lived up to the highest possibilities of the science and art of dentistry as applied to preservation of the natural teeth. Patients have their teeth filled and pay for it, only to find in a few years—sometimes in a few months—sometimes even in a few weeks, the work undone, and the last condition of that mouth worse than the first. It requires not many experiences of this kind to foster the idea that teeth cannot be saved, and that the practice of filling them is a delusion and a snare. I have heard this argument used many and many a time by people who referred to their own experience as proof. This brings us squarely face to face with the question as to the probable permanency of fillings when properly inserted. Is it by virtue of necessity that so many fillings fail after a limited service? Must we acknowledge that with all our boasted handicraft we are able to accomplish nothing but the most temporary results in our operations? A few years ago a practitioner published a statement wherein he sought to prove by tabulated records, that the average duration of a gold filling was only about three years; and I very well remember a good friend of mine getting up in a meeting shortly after and claiming that he thought the estimate too high. I rebelled strenuously against such an assertion at the time, and, to-day, I rebel more than ever, in the light of a careful study of my own records, after a continuous practice in one place of more than twelve years. I want to say to you gentlemen, in all sincerity, and with nothing but the most modest opinion of my own ability as an operator, that if I was not thoroughly convinced, that every day of my practice I was inserting fillings that would do service for ten, fifteen, twenty years—in fact, for the future lifetime of the patient, I should feel a sense of humiliation and defeat sufficient to stamp me in my own estimation as a failure among my fellow men. That this is no idle boast, and that I am not alone in the conviction, I give you the sentiments of two men of integrity in the profession, both modest and reliable, both carefully studious of their records, and each having practiced in his respective locality between thirty and forty years. One of them is now dead, the other living. One said to me, when questioned on the subject, after due deliberation and a modest estimate of his work—he was, in reality, one of the most modest men I ever