

It is, also, an opinion of my own—and consequently there is nothing compulsory about its acceptance—that no dentist can do nice, thorough and intricate work while his rooms, instruments and tools are in such a state of disorder and confusion as to be far more conducive to insanity than to delicate manipulation.

Even children are observant of our appearance and habits. You may have heard of the small boy—one of the irrepressible sort—who refused to submit to the extracting of the second tooth unless assured that new instruments would be used that “hadn’t been in everybody’s mouth;” and when his parents endeavored to convince him that the dentist washed the forceps after use, much as the cook washes the knives and forks after meals, he declared that when his first tooth was extracted “the dentist only wiped them on an old rag and put them back in the case.”

The first few years of a dentist’s professional life usually form a criterion of his future career, and if, with strict integrity and patience, he faithfully and firmly adheres to duty, regardless of dollars and cents, his reputation soon becomes assured. Later on the influx of dollars and cents will amply prove this theory. He should not allow his account book and ledger to tell of immediate financial success so much as his standing in the estimation of the community. As the painter or sculptor keeps continually before his imagination an exalted ideal, so let us in the practice of our own art, set our standard high.

Let us also remember that the value of a thing always corresponds with the actual cost. The kindly smile, the gentle word, the indication of sympathy for suffering, the delicate care in the performance of painful operations, apparently cost little; their real cost, however, is found in the previous cultivation of sunny spirits and humane dispositions.

The professional skill upon which depends our success or reputation may seem comparatively easy to a mere observer, for he does not reckon the years of patient effort, the diligent study and practice, or even the financial expense which this skill cost us. And we ourselves should expect no more from our profession than we are willing to put into it in the shape of thorough, serious, earnest mental and physical labor.

You have doubtless heard of the shoemaker who considered his work just as important as the minister’s, and to illustrate, taking up a pair of boys’ shoes, said: “That boy’s body ought to be kept healthy, hadn’t it? I am goin’ to do my part; if he should catch cold some muddy day and get pneumonia or somethin’ of the sort, his father would have a heavy doctor’s bill to pay—and even then the boy might die. I can’t afford to put poor work into that job. Too much depends on it. I propose to mend them shoes as though my salvation depended on’t. I wouldn’t like to meet that