

Gold as a Material for Filling Teeth.

R. E. SPARKS, L.D.S., Kingston, Ont.

Much has been, and is being written upon the subject of materials best adapted for the successful filling of teeth. Owing to their malleability, lead and tin were used with considerable success before gold in its present forms and the plastic fillings, now so popular, were prepared.

Gold was the next material which came into general use, and is said to have been used at a very early date. But only during the present century has the operation of preserving the natural teeth, by means of filling the cavities made by decay, been very generally performed with any marked degree of success.

So wedded to gold, as a filling material, were the old operators of the present generation, that it became an axiom with them, that a tooth which was worth filling at all was worth filling with gold. The man who dared to suggest that plastic material might be used to advantage in certain cases was set down as a crank or charlatan. Gold possessed advantages over the other then known materials. Lead and tin were soft, and consequently became worn away by the friction of mastication. Their dull color showing through thin enamel walls gave the teeth a discolored appearance. Gold was dense and withstood friction well. It also retained its color and brilliancy. So late as the edition of 1871 of "Harris' Principles and Practice of Dentistry," the author says of gold: "It is the only material in the opinion of the author which should be employed for the permanent filling of teeth."

Gold was first used as non-cohesive foil, and, to be retained in the cavity, required retaining pits or grooves in almost all directions. The contour fillings, which are the pride of so many operators, were wholly unknown. It was not until Dr. Robert Arthur wrote a treatise on "The use of adhesive foil," as late as 1857, and demonstrated the applicability of this form of gold in filling teeth, that the use of cohesive foil became at all general. If gold was found to be such a valuable filling material when used as non-cohesive only, what may be said of its value in its cohesive form, when a cavity having two walls, or even one wall, well