

ECONOMICS IN RELATION TO DENTISTRY.*

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Human society is analogous to the physical structure of man. It is a very complex organism, and its anatomy and physiology are difficult to understand. The individual members of society are the cells of the social structure (and pretty big "cells" some of them are). Like the human organism, society is an evolved product. As time proceeds differentiation takes place, the cells are grouped, forming various organs having special functions, but each dependent and inter-dependent upon the other. While this differentiation seems to have reached its limit in the human body, not so in the social structure, which is constantly becoming more and more complex; hence greater and greater the difficulty becomes of seeing and understanding the relation and dependence of the various parts. According to the law of evolution, then, dentists are differentiated members of society for a special work, but very much dependent upon other members of society for their well-being.

It is an old saying, "All roads lead to Rome," and it is equally true that all questions lead to economics, for on economics all industries and professions are based. By economics I mean the science of man's temporal well-being in the widest sense, but in this address I shall lay special emphasis upon that part of the science which relates to the *production* and *distribution* of wealth in relation to the dentist.

As in the human organism so in the social structure, if anything is wrong anywhere, it is felt by all the members. When "hard times" come those who supply the luxuries of life feel the pressure most. Artificial teeth may not be classed as luxuries, but they are things that can be dispensed with, for, when poor people have no teeth to chew their crust of bread, they can soak it and "gum it." The great law of supply and demand touches us as well as all other producers. We hear a great deal about "over-production." It is not a question of over-production that we have to deal with, but rather a question of under-consumption. The professions are overcrowded, we hear—too many dentists, too much of everything that is good, and still the people are in want. It is evident there is *something* wanting. Society is economically sick, and the demand of the age is not for more D.D.S.'s nor M.D.'s, but for more social physicians.

We have reached a period in our politico-economic history when, if we are to make further progress, or have symmetrical

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