

seek. Ordinary dental operations require for their successful performance an unusual degree of manual dexterity and mechanical skill, to acquire which a considerable period of training is requisite. In our own century extraction of teeth was commonly performed by blacksmiths and barbers, while jewellers and ivory carvers made the artificial dental appliances. Later, dentists being noted rather for dexterity with tools than for scientific attainment, dentistry was associated chiefly with the mechanical work of extracting and repairing teeth and the manufacture of artificial substitutes for them.

To the ignorant or thoughtless a dentist is no more a surgeon than is a truss-maker; they see only the mechanical process, the art, and fail to note or apprehend that progress in the science of dentistry, within very recent years, has been so great and rapid as fully to entitle to rank among medical specialists its practitioners, who, within the memory of living man, were, as Messrs. Godon and Roger point out, as much the object of depreciation and ridicule as the physician or surgeon of Molière's time. Nor, indeed, do such persons realize how recently it is in England that a surgeon has been regarded, by those willing to entrust their lives to his care, as a person of humble social position.

As the physician has ceased to be called a "leech," and the surgeon a "saw-bones," so has the dentist ceased to be described by cheap wits as a "tooth-carpenter," and if the minds of some persistently associate the dentist of to-day with the old-time peripatetic extractor of teeth and maker of cumbrous appliances, it is largely due to the unprofessional business methods still adopted by certain persons, notably proprietors of so-called "dental parlors," who, like the ancient barber-surgeons of Henry VIII., "minding only their own lucre and nothing the profit or ease of the diseased or patient," make hideous displays to wayfarers, and by advertising cheap work, snare poor patients, whom they commit to the hands of employees, too often ignorant, unskillful and unlicensed.

It is because the due practice of operative dentistry requires professional attainments of a high order; a general knowledge of the human economy, and a very special knowledge of the oral tract, its customary lesions, diseases, and abnormalities, as well as manual dexterity, that laws prohibiting the ignorant from such practice are distinctly legislation in the interest of the public health. The statute of New York recognizing this expressly exempts from its purview the "mechanical dentist," *i.e.*, the handicraftsman who works in the laboratory upon inert matter. Of this mechanic, the operator, his employer, expects, it is true, excellence in his art, but the law exacts nothing. It is with the operator, whose work is upon the living organism, that the statute