

teeth above medium in structure nothing compares with gold as a filling material. It is as durable when properly manipulated as the rock on which the man built his house. Use gold by all means as a filling material when it is consistent with tooth preservation; but in proportion as the teeth fall below the average in density will be the number of failures with gold, though the greater the skill the better will be the result. Our only recourse, then, is a plastic filling. We must really descend and become in some degree "tooth-plasterers." It is apparent that some are prejudiced against the use of plastics, to the injury of the teeth, their owners and as often the claims of the operator. As the late Dr. Atkinson happily puts it, "Such a man ought to be prayed with."

The successful utilization of plastic fillings depends as much upon specific adaptation of means to ends, as does the successful utilization of gold depend upon manipulative ability. The plastic fillings commonly used are amalgam, cement and gutta-percha. Amalgam is the sheet anchor for the treatment of soft teeth; it answers admirably most of the requirements of a filling material, its color alone making it non-applicable to the anterior teeth. In teeth of the lowest scale of density, even amalgam has to take a second place. Nearly everyone uses it nowadays more or less. No other material has had such a hard struggle for a place in dentistry. In the early days of amalgam, the better class of dentists waged war against it on "general principles"—it would lower the manipulative skill and professional standing of dentists. Time has brought its own refutation. Never in the history of dentistry has professional standing and manipulative ability been so high as to-day, notwithstanding tons of amalgam have been used as a filling material. It long ago outlived an inherited prejudice, and we are now in danger of going to the other extreme of using it when not indicated.

In filling the teeth with amalgam, the cavity should be prepared with as much care as with gold; edges should be beveled and all angles removed. When the decay is deep seated and the removal of the decomposed dentine would expose the pulp, it is excellent practice to thoroughly carbolize the cavity, cap with gutta-percha or cement, using great care to have the edges of the cavity free from decay. The enamel should be cut away until the edges become thick and strong. Always have your patient return in three or four days that you may polish the fillings with sand-paper and cuttle-fish disks. This gives the filling a smooth surface and frees it from any overhanging edges. It also adds not a little to its appearance, as it will not tarnish to the same degree as if left rough. Another consideration not to be overlooked is the opportunity to examine your work at your own leisure. Now and then you will find a little fissure you had excavated and in your hurry had forgotten to fill.