

Selections.

Teeth Below Medium in Structure.—Their Treatment.*

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During our last census considerable discussion was had and indignation manifested by certain dentists as to whether or not they should be classed as manufacturers; whether or not dentistry was a mechanical or a professional calling. The making of a set of teeth is certainly a mechanical operation, likewise the burring out of a simple cavity and the filling thereof with amalgam or gold. But where a careful examination of the mouth is made to determine the best method of constructing a denture; where the trained eye is called into play to determine the most suitable tooth for the sex and temperament of the patient; in operative dentistry, where the operation necessitates not only the mechanical act of stopping a cavity, but also calls into play the judgment as to the most suitable filling material for the patient, the tooth, and its position in the dental arch, different cases requiring different treatment, then the mechanical ends and the professional begins. The treatment of teeth below medium in structure, I find, calls for more professional attention than mechanical.

What is the most suitable material for these teeth? Gold? How many times in the course of a year you examine mouths studded with soft, frail teeth and find patients completely discouraged; undecided whether they shall continue to have their teeth filled and refilled, or have them extracted. You examine the mouth and find eighteen or twenty teeth filled with gold in which decay has recommenced around the filling. Of course, they are not *your* fillings; they were inserted by your competitor down the street. If you are recently graduated, you say, "Fill those teeth with gold, certainly." You talk airily, indiscreetly also, about improper manipulation, and refill with gold. We are sorry for you of course, but more sorry for the patient. If, however, you have been in practice for several years, you have come to the conclusion some time past, that there are other conscientious operators in the world besides yourself, and hesitate for fear of a similar experience. "He who has not discovered cause, has no remedy for effect." To do nothing unless you know what to do, is practice that will be pursued by every judicious practitioner. Can we diagnose the case before us? I have diagnosed it; it is a case of *incompatibility of tooth structure and filling material*. One of the plastic filling materials is called for. What! not use gold? Yes, in its proper place; in

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