

before; and the number of instruments and fixtures, which are counted almost indispensable in the modern office, represents a cash outlay for equipment far in excess of that required even so far back as I can remember. Take the matter of fountain spittoons, for example. Only a few years ago there was not one in Peoria, and now there are at least a dozen. During the last two years we have nearly all invested in cataphoric outfits. Have these machines lessened or increased the cost of our finished product? These are a few of the things which plainly show that lessened cost of production cannot exactly be designated as the main cause which has forced the general scale of prices down.

About ten years ago the fever for crown and bridge-work set in and was soon at its height. The public mind became suddenly convinced that here, at least, was a pancea for all the ills that the teeth are heir to. This idea was largely due to the representations and promises of the dentists who were promoting this branch of the work with great vigor, and who were more anxious to believe their own fairy-like statements than were their patients. Naturally enough, for when a man gets \$15 or \$20 for every tooth fixed in this way, as nearly every one did when the work was new, there is unquestionably a margin of profit in the transaction which might well cause even a plumber to reflect. This is just what a great many plumbers, to say nothing of school-teachers, locksmiths, barbers, and even doctors, did—they reflected; and, after thinking the matter over, decided to forsake their former vocations and follow ours, which they evidently supposed to be an easier and more lucrative employment.

There were many dental colleges ready, and more soon started, to accommodate these aspirants; and so it has come about that, in the last five years, there has been a tremendous increase in the percentage of dentists in every community. We all know in a general way that this is true; but I never realized to what an extent it had progressed until I looked up the matter a few days ago in my own city, with the following result: In 1888 there were fourteen practicing dentists in Peoria, and in 1893 there were sixteen, but now there are no less than thirty-two. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the number of men in our profession has perhaps more than doubled in the last five years. The increase of population has not been at all proportionate, and the kindred profession of medicine has made a gain of only from 10 to 15 per cent. during the same period. Need we look further for the cause of lessened prices? I think not.

When a young man starts practice in a town he is forced to offer some inducement to people to patronize him, and what is more natural than that he should entice them by means of a discount or an inside price; or, what is still worse, that he should