

Valuable Hints to the Dentist

There is just one way to receive a patient on his or her first appearance in your chair, whether your own patient or one just assigned to you, and that way is this: Give each a close, careful examination, go over every tooth, examine every piece of work already there, commenting favorably, if you wish, on all the good work. Be very careful, however, about expressing an opinion about any work there that might fall a little under grade, if in your judgment the work should be done over, say so without a long explanation of the lack of skill in evidence on the part of the person who did the work. If you can't keep still for the sake of charity and good will to others, then do it for fear you may adversely discuss a forgotten piece of your own work sometime. If lack of time allows no examination, only an appointment, then place after the name "to be examined." By doing this from the very start it will in time become second nature to you.

Allow your patients to have the hand mirror; let them see for themselves all the various conditions found in the mouth. Many times they are not aware of decays, these being out of ordinary sight; the reflecting glass and hand mirror will oftentimes give them great surprise. If you do this they will never say you made holes in their teeth to fill.

Sometimes we chafe under the advice, restrictions, admonishings of our teachers, our elders, or those over us. Teachers themselves are held accountable by others for the welfare and advancement of those under their charge. None are so perfect but that counseling is needed, sometimes a shortcoming made plain. If a teacher frets under the watchfulness of those to whom he is accountable, he had better get out; so is it with the student.

Don't hesitate to ask for help and advice. But above all things learn to go to your books. Go to your books. Let those four words sink deep into your brain. Don't sell your textbooks, thinking you are forever through with them when examinations are over. If you desire to be only

an ordinary commonplace tinker in dentistry, then forget you ever had a book. If you desire good reputation, skill and good judgment, go to your books now, ten years from now, forty years from now; when you get into practice indulge occasionally in a new book relating to your profession. Don't attempt to read it as you would a novel, skimming over it and then adding it to your library of has-beens. Go to it for advice.

Let's back trade to our new patient again. When your examination is over, plan out your work; let it be your campaign, for so it is, your fight against destruction. Don't fear to let your patient know something of your plans. He will think more kindly of you if you do. Don't let him see worry stamped all over your face. If you must distort your features through doubt and anxiety, go make faces at yourself in some far-off looking glass. You will find it a good tonic for an addled brain. Don't get the notion into your head that swaggering and horse play with more or less roughness about the patient impresses him with the idea of your manliness. You may not believe it, but I once saw John L. Sullivan, in the Pennsylvania railroad station at Pittsburg, pick up a frightened kitten as carefully as the most gentle woman might have done; in two minutes the little thing was purring on his arm.

Here are a few simple don'ts, guideposts on the road to painless dentistry: Don't squirt cold water into sensitive cavities. Don't play the end of the explorer around the vicinity of the pulp and ask if it hurts. Don't let your burs get hot. Don't let your chisels and excavators get dull. Don't work all the time on one spot. Don't attempt much work in the presence of a highly inflamed nerve. Don't forget that the patient can feel pain, whether you believe it or not, and so, don't continue producing pain when he indicates it, unless you can't absolutely help it.

When you are finally away from where assistance and advice may be obtained, please remember that "When in doubt lead"—no, I mean "go to your books."