

# The Progressive Dentist

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## THE DENTAL PARLOR.

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Of the many agencies tending to degrade the dental profession from a socially useful enterprise to a mere money-making scheme none have contributed so much towards that end as the Dental Parlor.

Are you familiar with this "institution" of American dental life? If not, as an earnest student or graduate, you ought to make it your business to get familiar with its pernicious manifestations.

It flourishes principally in the poorer quarters of our larger cities. It is owned "boot and breeches" by unscrupulous business men who have never frequented nor even laid their eyes upon the equipment of an up-to-date dental college? They employ graduate dentists and exploit both these and the unfortunate who fall into their clutches.

What are the causes that have given rise to and make possible the flourishing of such a condition of affairs. They are the following:

1) *Commercialism*. Like a good many of our social activities, Dentistry has been commercialized. Business men who do not and cannot appreciate professional skill or knowledge have "taken up" dentistry purely as a business proposition, as a means of making profits, big profits. They are in the profession for what there is in it, to use a common expression.

2) *Inadequate Dental Laws.* The present dental laws are so inadequate and full of loopholes that they are taken advantage of and made to serve the ends of unscrupulous dentists and business men, thus degrading dentistry to the level of a lucrative business. As proof of the statement, notice the increase of the dental parlors and the multiplication of their nefarious practices.

3) *Non-Enforcement of Existing Laws.* If the existing laws, inadequate as they are, would be enforced the number of dental parlors would be reduced. But they are not. Why? Because the enforcement of these laws, in this State, is entrusted into the hands of the State authorities working in conjunction with the State Dental Societies.

Whenever a case of illegal practicing is brought to the attention of the authorities they refer same to the dental society having jurisdiction in that particular locality. As a rule the majority of the members of these societies are well-to-do practitioners plying their profession among the rich of the community, and not at all affected by the blighting influence of the dental parlor. Therefore their indifference.

Herein also lies the explanation why, so far, no earnest efforts have been made to force the State Legislature to pass more adequate laws that will protect the legal practitioner from the underhand methods of the illegal one.

4) *Competition.* In their anxiety to attract patients and increase their practice the dental parlors lower the price of dental work. The price that they are willing to offer their services for becomes the standard which the remainder of the dentists are forced to accept. Lowering prices necessarily means rendering inferior service. It means that the dentist is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to work against his very honest intentions unless he deliberately desires to commit professional suicide by earning that unenviable reputation "as a doctor without patients".

The general public has as yet to learn the lesson of the important relationship between bodily health and a set of sound teeth. It must also be taught the value of good, conscientious

professional service. In their ignorance they seek relief where it can be gotten cheapest, thus becoming the victims and dupes of the dental parlor's alluring signs and advertisements, of its empty promises and worthless guarantees.

What is the solution to this problem?

First, the immediate enactment of such laws as will prohibit, under penalty of the law, the ownership, control or management, directly or indirectly, of a dental office by a layman.

Second, the vigorous enforcement of future and existing laws not by the dental societies, but by the State authorities solely.

While the above-given remedies may temporarily improve existing conditions, yet we believe that the socialization of the dental profession offers the only permanent solution of the problem. Given a state in which every dentist will be under the direct control of the members of society he will have an opportunity to become in the real and full sense of the word a social servant. Once the incentive for profit is eliminated his ideal will be to serve his fellow man to the best of his ability. Only in the presence of social management and control will such an institution as the dental parlor disappear. Its existence will be an impossibility under the coming socialist republic.

All this is no "pipe-dream." The modern public-health movements are pointing out the line of development which the medical and scientific professions will follow in the future. They will aim, not to gain more dollars and cents, but service, social and humane service. But such a condition of affairs would be Socialism in Dentistry.



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## EDITORIAL.

With this issue of the "Progressive Dentist" we enter upon the troubled waters of journalism. Thackeray has said that with the issuing of every new newspaper or magazine the issuers thereof claim that there was a crying need for it and that humanity will be benefited thereby. While we do not

know whether there is a crying need or not for the "Progressive Dentist," we do believe that it has a function to perform. And while we do not know how far humanity will be benefited by it, we do know that the dental student and practitioner will.

The time has come, we believe, for progressive thought and action, both in the profession as well as in the social and political life of the dentist.

Thus we propose to bring to the attention of the dental student and practitioner new and progressive ideas that come forth in the profession and to widen his horizon with such social and political questions as affect the dental profession, chief among which is Socialism.

It will also be our aim to fight, via our humble pen, against whatever influences may be at work trying to degrade and sink in the slough of commercialism our cherished profession.

But to carry out this program we set before us we must have your co-operation. Will you help us?

FIELD NOTES.
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On Friday evening, January 5th, at a regular meeting of the Chapter, Wm. Mendelson will lecture on "What Socialism Is." The lecture will be held at the Club Rooms of the Intercollegiate Students of Russia, 56 St. Mark's Place (8th Street), and will begin at 8 p. m. sharp. All students and practitioners are requested to come and bring their friends.

Dr. Wm. J. Robinson, editor of "The Critic and Guide," etc., President of the American Society of Medical Sociology, will lecture on "Three Means of Improving the Human Race," Friday, March 1st, 1912. Admission free. Your friends are welcome. Meeting hall will be announced in our next issue.

Dr. Wm. J. Robinson has the reputation as a fighter of all forms of charlatanism in medical practice and we congratulate the Educational Committee in being able to secure so able a lecturer.

On December 1st last we held a very successful lecture with Dr. H. Wheeler, who spoke on "Oral Hygiene." The auditorium of the Eclectic Medical College, given to us for that evening through the kindness of the Dean of the college, was crowded. After the lecture a number of questions were asked which brought out some interesting phases of the oral hygiene question.

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