

## Contributed and Selected

### NATIVE DENTISTS IN CHINA.

J. F. RUPERT, U. S. NAVY, HOSPITAL CORPS.

Now that China is awakening from her long slumber of seclusion and self-satisfaction, in line with her progress in other directions, many evidences of an intelligent interest in modern dentistry may be observed in the Celestial Empire. In the large port-cities, many Chinese of the better class will be seen to have visited up-to-date dental establishments by evidences of modern dental work which they display. This has been done usually by foreigners practicing in China, and in some instances has been performed abroad; but in other cases—a direct evidence of progress—very satisfactory dental work is performed by native practitioners who have been educated abroad or who have been instructed in China under the eye and direction of the men who have learned their profession in foreign lands.

While this modern dental work is the fruit of the late progressive movement in China, the native element of self-sufficiency still prevails for the greater part with the masses, and the native dentist, pursuing his practice along the same lines his ancestors have followed for centuries, still conducts his business perhaps on the very spot where his father practiced the same profession.

Throughout China, on street corners and in alleyways, the native dentist may be seen, exhibiting hundreds of incisors and molars, as evidence of his skill and as encouragement to others to add their bit of ivory to the stock already on hand, which collection probably comprises many inheritances from former generations.

His furniture consists of a table and chair. His instruments consist of the crudest forceps and scrapers made to order at the blacksmith shop. Of medicines he knows nothing. His real stock in trade are his wits and his general power of argumentation.

Silver fillings are made, but no gold work is attempted. He has no drills and the cavity is scraped out with home-made spoons. The technique of his work consists of filing silver coins and mixing these filings with mercury, which amalgam, after being inserted into the cavity, rapidly hardens; but trouble often arises later when as is likely the more or less exposed nerve resents such primitive treatment and the pseudo-dentist is at a loss for means of removing the filling. Nothing can then be done by him but extract the tooth.

The price charged for extraction of teeth is from 20 to 40 cents, local currency (about 8 to 16 cents gold), for each. Price is arranged to meet the financial standing of each individual; while earnest endeavor is made to convince the patient that *his* particular tooth is most difficult to extract and requires exceptional skill—all of which adds increased expense.

As in all dentistry practice, the Chinese practitioner will occasionally encounter cases which he would rather have had presented to the "man across the street," but the Mongolian practitioner thinks as much of his professional reputation as his more civilized *confreres*, and when such cases present themselves his wits are equal to the occasion. He dismisses the patient by stating that the tooth is a "blood tooth," and should it be extracted the patient will most surely bleed to death. This explanation should be sufficient for any one, white or yellow, but pain is not easily disposed of and in cases where the extraction of the tooth is insisted upon, the dentist will explain that as his assumption of the responsibility of extracting the tooth carries with it possibilities of grave results to his career and reputation, he cannot attempt the operation for less than \$5.00. This is expected to cause the patient to seek relief at a less price, and this is the usual result.

I have seen these street-corner dentists extract teeth by fastening a strong thread about the tooth and extracting it by leverage.

However, as in the practice of medicine, so in the practice of dentistry, we find many very good Chinese practitioners who use modern methods. In Nanking, at one time the Imperial capital of China and a city with an old and important history, showing evidence of the present progress in China along these lines, a young Chinaman has established a very fine dental parlor. A large waiting room for foreigners, with the latest magazines of America and Europe upon the table, and separate rooms for Chinese patients have been provided.

This man, Dr. Yin Seong Hoh, was taught his profession by an American dentist in Honolulu. He has a complete equipment, a strictly up-to-date and well-selected dental library, and his methods and practices are in accordances with modern ideas on asepsis and antisepsis. Nanking has not more than eighty foreign residents, mostly missionary people, and this energetic young man is building up a good practice among the Chinese who have learned about some of the benefits of European civilization. Shanghai has a Chinese dental firm, Kingman & Kingman, who have a large and well-equipped establishment. The wealthy Chinese are patronizing this work, and eventually it is bound to spread to the common people, for it is not from lack of confidence in such work that it is not more general, for crude dentistry has been practiced for centuries in China, but the price charged looks extravagant to people whose one ambition in life is to make money. A rich native of the great yellow empire spends money with prodigality, but he prefers, like most of us, to spend it in other ways than patronizing his dental brothers.