

"Swabs."

By MISS ISABEL H. PENNIE.

In modern surgery the swab has quite ousted the Turkish sponge from the field, and, although its powers of absorption are inferior to those of the latter, it has the great advantage

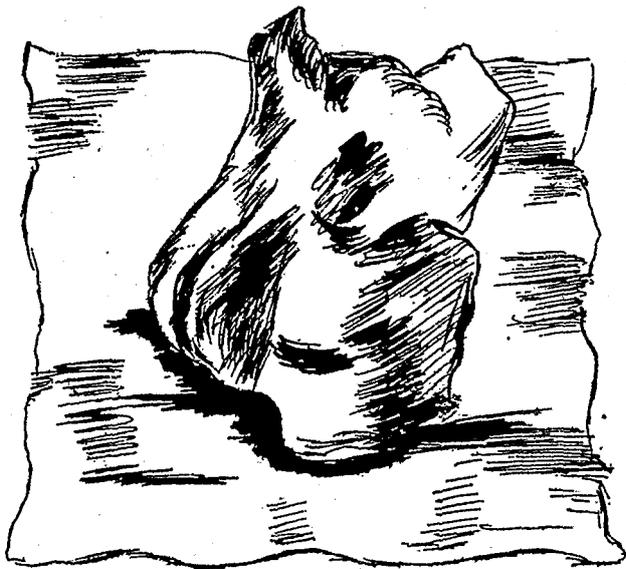


FIG. 1.

of being of such material as to render its thorough asepticity a matter of extreme simplicity by the process of steam sterilisation.

During my training I worked under London surgeons, and, on coming to the Scotch capital, I at once observed the difference in the swabs used.

The common or "ordinary" swab.—"Oh!" I can hear a nurse say, "anyone can make a common swab." Now, that is exactly where that nurse is wrong; certainly, any nurse can make a swab, but can she make it *well*?"

How well I remember the first swabs I made when theatre "pro."! Having got them round and plump, I was highly delighted with my handiwork, until Sister came to inspect them. The result was, I had to unpick all the knots in the gauze, bring my "dumplings" to ruins, and start afresh, under Sister's guidance.

Perhaps someone who makes "dumplings" would like to know how to make a light, airy swab that will delight the heart of the surgeon. Presuming the wool has been put on the radiator, or hung by the fire to "fluff" up, cut it in pieces of 6 in. by 6 in. From one of the

latter, lift a layer of wool as thin as possible, and lay it on the sheet you will have spread on the table before commencing. Then, in the centre of this square, place, lightly, a few scraps of wool and cuttings of gauze (fig. 1).

Then gather up the edges all round into a ball shape (see fig. 2), taking care to handle lightly. Place it on a square of gauze 7 ins. by 7 ins. and picking up the top right corner, and the bottom left corner, tie in a surgical knot. Tie the remaining corners, and cut the ends, tucking the latter neatly in; the finished swab will now look smaller than you expect, and something like fig. 3. Do not make *shape* your object, but keep in mind that the lighter the swab is made, the more it will absorb. Very small swabs made on the same lines are used by some eye specialists, and also fixed on the end of forceps, in some cases of trephining.

Abdominal Swabs.—For "abdominals," some surgeons use swabs of Turkish towelling, in squares of 9 ins. by 9 ins., bound with tape; they keep the heat, absorb well, and are economical, as they go to the laundry with the theatre linen, and can be sterilised and used as long as they retain their "nap."

A speciality of one of our surgeons was a gangee-tissue swab, made by cutting a square of tissue 8 ins. by 8 ins., and overcasting the edge neatly with cotton, taking care to keep the frayed edges tucked in. Its advantage over the Turkish towelling was, that, being of new

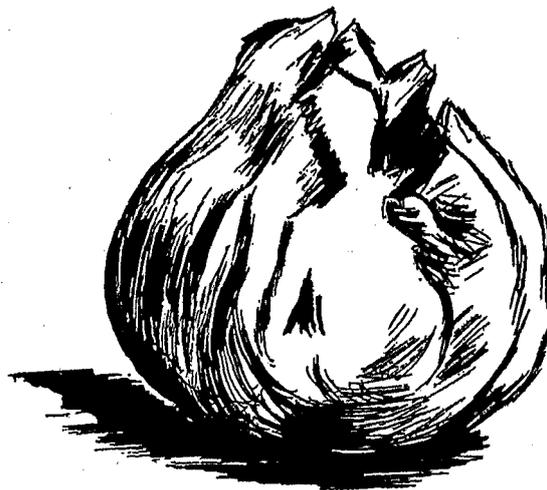


FIG. 2.

material, it was thoroughly aseptic, but it did not retain the heat, nor absorb so well, and the overcast edge was hard. Absorbent wool cut the required size, and enclosed in gauze, tacking securely with needle and thread, would give the same swab, minus the rough edge.

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