

## THE FREE AIR TREATMENT OF SKIN GRAFTS.\*

By A. ROCYN JONES, M.B., B.S.Lond.,  
M.R.C.S. Eng.,  
Senior House Surgeon at the Royal National  
Orthopædic Hospital.

The annotation which appeared in *The Lancet* of June 14th last, p. 1682, with reference to a recent article upon "Skin Grafting Without Dressings" in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the subsequent letter of Mr. G. Lenthal Cheatle are of interest. In 1907 a similar method, based on a short description by Nélaton and Ombrédanne, was adopted by Mr. E.

Muirhead Little at the Royal National Orthopædic Hospital. For some years previous to this he had applied dry dressing upon the grafts, but for the last six years a different technique has been carried out in all the cases where it has been found necessary to perform skin grafting.

The following is an account of the procedure. Thiersch's grafts are applied to the raw area in the ordinary way, but no protective or dressing of any kind is allowed to remain in contact with the grafts.

The next step is the application of a cage of wire and cotton gauze surrounding, but well away from, the grafts. A reference to the illustrations will

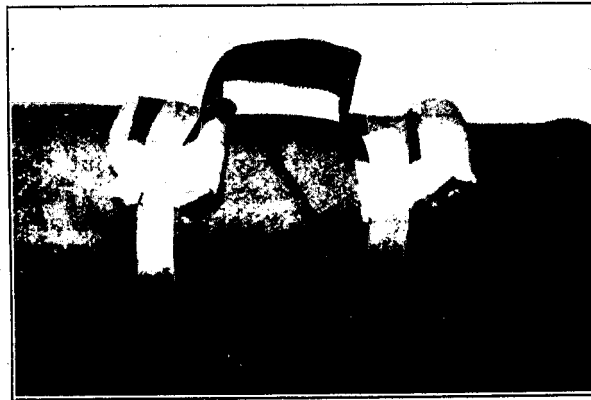
facilitate the description. A strip of wire gauze, broader than the area to be covered, is cut and fashioned so that it forms a bridge stretching well beyond the extremities of the grafted surface. The bridge, previously boiled, is put with its flanges resting on a layer of wool placed above and below the area, and is secured thus by strapping passing over each flange to the skin beyond.

Over this structure two or three layers of sterilised cotton gauze are placed so as to form a complete cage for the grafts, taking care to fix the soft mesh only near its borders, this being done by several turns of bandage. By this means air is allowed to circulate freely through the gauze and over the grafts, thus promoting drying of the parts, while

good protection is afforded from minor accidents, as dust or flies. An ordinary bed cradle is placed over the cage, and in the case of the lower limb it is well to separate the

clothes at the bottom of the bed to permit free access of air. The cage is untouched until the fifth day after operation, when the bandage is removed and the soft gauze raised, but leaving the wire bridge intact. By this time black crusts will have formed between the edges of the grafts, and the appearance is often somewhat unpro-

misg. With a sterile forceps the crusts are carefully picked off without doing the slightest damage to the new tissue. No attempt is made to wash or apply lotion to the parts. The bridge is left untouched during the whole of the after treatment, and after the



TO ILLUSTRATE MODE OF APPLYING THE BRIDGE OF WIRE GAUZE.



THE CAGE COMPLETE.

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