

A METHOD OF APPLYING PLASTER-JACKETS WITHOUT THE SAYRE SUSPENSION APPARATUS.

The plaster-jacket marked a distinct advance in the treatment of diseases of the spinal column. Its use has not been a temporary "fad," or fashion, like so many medical or surgical discoveries.

No improvement has been made on Dr. Sayre's admirable method of making or applying the jacket. There has come a change in the idea as to the amount of degree of suspension necessary. I remember seeing Dr. Sayre, at the outset, have the subject raised entirely from the floor, suspended clear, in fact. Later it was not, and is not now, deemed necessary to do more than take most of the weight from the spinal column; the subject's feet are now allowed to rest upon the floor during the application of the jacket.

The disadvantages of the Sayre suspension method are briefly these: 1, The expense of the apparatus; 2, the danger more or less, in the use of suspension by unskilled hands; 3, the necessity for haste in the application of the plaster; 4, the necessity of taking the suspension apparatus off and moving the subject before the plaster has thoroughly set; 5, owing to the foregoing difficulties, a considerable amount of skill and experience is necessary to successfully apply a plaster-jacket after the Sayre method.

In the following will be found a substitute that will overcome the difficulties mentioned above, and bring the use of the plaster-jacket into the

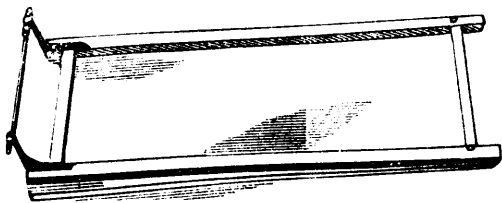


FIG. 1.

scope of thousands who have not the skill and experience needed to use the Sayre method. It should be borne in mind that it is not claimed that this method offers many advantages over the Sayre method to those who have the suspension apparatus or skill to apply it, it is intended for the practitioner more especially.

My apparatus consists of an oblong wooden frame, two and one-half feet wide by six feet in length. This is fastened together at the corners by pins, so that it can be taken apart and put away. Along the outer edge of each long side is a groove, an inch deep, which fits a wedge-strip that can be fastened with screws. On the upper end of each long piece is screwed a common cast-iron bracket-holder, with a piece of broom handle carried across from

the free end of one bracket to the other. The child grasps this cross-bar and holds itself in position. The frame being completed, a stout piece of unbleached muslin is stretched tightly over it and tacked along the outer sides of the frame below the grooves. Then the long strips are driven into the grooves and fastened. This stretches the muslin as smoothly and tightly as a drum-head, and absolutely prevents its slipping during the application of the jacket. This completes the apparatus.

In using it the end with the cross-bar on is placed on a high table or desk, and the foot upon a chair. The child is laid upon the frame, on its back, its hands carried above its head to grasp the cross-bar. An assistant may steady the grasp of the hands if necessary. The body is then straightened and stretched by gentle traction on the feet. Everything being in readiness to apply the plaster, the foot of the frame is lowered to the floor, so that the subject rests upon an inclined plane. This maintains and increases the stretching already given the child. Now, with a sharp knife make a cut in the cotton along each side of the child, close to its body, from the axilla to the middle of the hip, or as low as the plaster is to be applied. From the *middle* point of this cut make a cut in the cloth out to the frame. This at once gives a triangular opening on each side of the subject close up to the body. By making the opening triangular instead of square, the tension on the cloth supporting the head and hips is not relaxed. The child's head and shoulders rest on the stretched cloth above, its hips and legs rest on that below, and along its back is still a strip of the cotton. There is not much tension on this strip now, as it has no side supports, and hence it moulds itself to the shape of the back.

The operator stands at the right side of the frame and commences applying the wet bandages. The openings on each side allow the plaster bandages to be carried around the body, outside, the strip of cloth, along the child's back, with perfect ease, and placed exactly in position. The strip of cotton along the back is incorporated into the jacket between the shirt and the plaster. There need be no haste in applying the bandages, as the child can remain comfortably in this position for fifteen minutes. When the plaster has been properly put on and smoothed down and has begun to harden, the foot of the frame is again raised upon a chair or stool, and the jacket allowed to "set" thoroughly before moving the child. Then cut the ends of the longitudinal strip of cloth that forms part of the jacket and raise the child to its feet.

The advantages that may be claimed for this method of applying a plaster-jacket to children are: 1, It is absolutely safe in any hands; 2, it is agreeable to the patient and his friends and pre-