

teeth. First we will consider the mouth-napkin, which alone, or in connection with wedges, duct compressors, etc., formed the only protection against moisture in dental operations until the introduction of rubber dam. And it may be interesting to the young operator who may feel that he cannot trust himself to undertake the simplest filling of gold without the application of the dam, that that luxury was unknown to the profession until its invention and introduction by the late Dr. Barnum, of New York, in the year 1867.

Until the introduction of amalgam, the only materials available for filling teeth were gold, lead, tin-foil and gutta-percha; and the only means of keeping the cavities dry was, as I said before, mouth napkins, wedges, duct compressors, etc. The size of the mouth napkin is a matter of taste with the operator. I prefer a simple piece of bleached cotton (old cotton is softer and more absorbent than new), about 3 by 5 inches, unhemmed and folded lengthwise; folding the two edges towards each other and folding upon itself. To introduce it into the mouth, put the end of one finger at the centre of the folded napkin, press it to the desired position, forming a U with the ends protruding; the one end tucked between the cheek, or lip and teeth; the other, if a lower case, tucked between the teeth and tongue. By asking the patient to allow you to put the napkin under the tip of the tongue, the tongue will rise, admitting the napkin readily to pass under. If the operation is likely to be prolonged, or if it be necessary to allow the teeth to come together, two napkins may be used; doubling and forming a couple of rolls, place one between the cheek and the teeth, and the other under the tongue.

This will admit of the teeth coming together as in testing the articulation when cementing on a crown or bridge. When adjusting to the upper jaw, the free end may be spread over the lower teeth and tongue, where it will catch pieces of filling which may drop from the cavity. If the cavity to be filled be simple, or even compound, if it do not encroach upon the gum and is to be filled with plastic material, this may be all the protection it may need. If, however, it extend above or below the gum margin, and especially if the gum has been wounded in the preparation of the cavity, additional means must be resorted to. If the cervical wall of the cavity do not extend much above or below the gum margin, a small, thin wedge may be pressed in firmly and the ends cut off with a wedge cutter. If, however, the cervical wall extend above the gum margin, a matrix may be used successfully for a plastic filling. When a wedge is used it should be inserted and the ends cut off before the napkin is adjusted.