

CHAPTER

8

Beautiful HANDS

WILLIAM STEWART HALSTED WAS 37 YEARS OLD AND a dynamo of energy and ideas when he became Surgeon-in-Chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore upon its opening in 1889. At that time, general anesthesia was less than 50 years old and bacteria had only more recently been recognized as a cause of disease.

Over the next 30 years, Dr. Halsted and his protégés made monumental improvements in surgical concepts and techniques and brought surgery into the modern era. He thereby earned the epitaph, “Father of American Surgery.”

How then could the development of surgical gloves stem from warm concerns of love rather than cool surgical reasoning? In that era, doctors recognized the benefits of scrubbing their skin before surgery, but they operated with bare hands. The surgical instruments were boiled or baked and then immersed in carbolic acid to ensure sterility. It was the surgical nurse’s responsibility to pick instruments out of the carbolic acid jars and trays and hand them to the surgeon.

Dr. Halsted was distressed to see a severe rash on the head surgical nurse’s hands and forearms produced by this practice. He asked the Goodyear Rubber Company to make two pairs of thin rubber gloves for her. These worked so well that other members

The Hand Owner's Manual

Other topics covered in Chapter 8: Beautiful Hands

FINGERNAILS: BLESSINGS OR CURSES?

How they grow, how they go bad

STAINING AND PAINTING

Use of henna, fingernail polish

RINGS AND RING INJURIES

History of this custom and unsuspected, associated perils

HAND MODELING

Could your hands be movie stars?

COSMETIC HAND SURGERY

What's possible? What's practical?

THE SECRET JOINT

Palm up/palm down demystified

BEAUTY IN NO MAN'S LAND

Tendon healing in the fingers