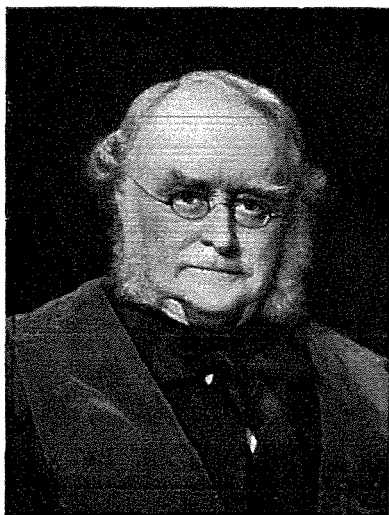


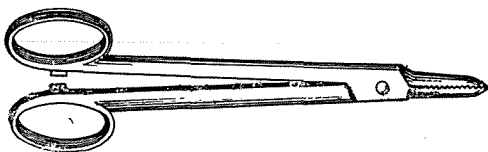


SPENCER WELLS' FORCEPS

SIR THOMAS
SPENCER
WELLS
1818-1897

THOMAS SPENCER WELLS was born at St. Albans, the eldest son of William Wells, a builder. He was apprenticed to Michael Sadler, a general practitioner of Barnsley, in Yorkshire, and later he attended the General Infirmary at Leeds.

Next he studied at Trinity College, Dublin, and he completed his undergraduate training at St. Thomas's Hospital, London, before qualifying M.R.C.S. (Eng.) in 1841. He forth-



The original Spencer Wells' Forceps (from the *British Medical Journal*, 10th January, 1874). The instrument was made by Krohne & Sessman

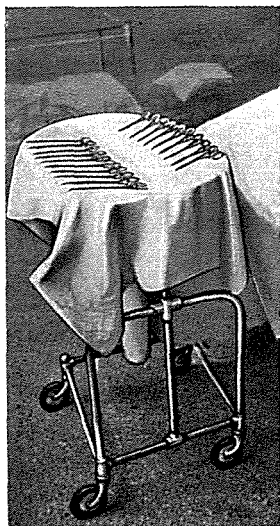
with joined the Navy and served for six years in the Naval Hospital at Malta, where he was allowed to engage in civil practice in addition to his Naval duties. Such good reports were received concerning his work at Malta that in 1844 he was awarded the F.R.C.S. by election. His term of office at Malta being completed, he left the Navy, and soon afterwards settled in Brook Street, London, as an ophthalmologist. Spencer Wells had had a large experience in obstetrics, and

when a vacancy occurred in 1854 he applied and was elected Surgeon to the Samaritan Hospital. At this time the hospital consisted of only one house. On the outbreak of the Crimean war, he volunteered, and was sent first to Smyrna and afterwards to the Dardenelles, and gained great experience in gun-shot wounds. He returned to London in 1856, determined to apply the knowledge he had gained in abdominal wounds to the diseases peculiar to women. At that time oöphorectomy was associated with an appalling mortality, but in spite of initial failures, he rose above the almost overwhelming prejudices that surrounded the performance of this operation. In 1858 he performed his first successful oöphorectomy. In 1880 he published an account of his first 1,000 cases. By his careful methods and perseverance he was able to turn the operation into one of comparative safety.

Spencer Wells' name is perpetuated by his invention of the hæmostatic forceps which bear his name. Before the invention of artery forceps, the fingers of an assistant were used to control bleeding during an operation. Wells' forceps were based upon the old artery forceps of Liston, and the crude 'bull-dogs' of the famous German surgeon, Dieffenbach. It will be seen from the illustration that the original pattern had only one catch. This idea has been improved upon, and the modern instrument has three or four.

Spencer Wells' operations were models of surgical procedure and his operating theatre at the Samaritan Hospital was thronged by surgeons from far and near. He worked in absolute silence, and submitted his assistants to a rigid discipline.

In 1883 Spencer Wells reached the peak of his career when



Modern Spencer Wells' Forceps ready for use

Robert Liston (see p. 60).

Johann Friedrich Dieffenbach, 1792-1847. Surgeon to the Charité, Berlin, and later Professor at the University. Was the first to treat strabismus successfully by severing the tendons of the eye muscles.

he was elected President of the Royal College of Surgeons, and received a baronetcy. In person Sir Spencer Wells was rather more than medium height, slightly portly, genial, modest, dignified and unassuming in manner. In debate his utterances were clear, positive, comprehensive but not aggressive, unless



Spencer Wells' private residence, Golders Hill Park, Golders Green.

he was roused to self-defence by personal attacks upon himself or his professional career. He was a keen lover, and fine judge, of horses, and drove himself daily in a phaeton and pair from his private residence (now Golders Hill Park) in Golders Green to his rooms in Upper Grosvenor Street. He died near Cannes in 1897 and his body was cremated at Woking.

On the portals of his house at Golder's Green is carved
Do to-day's work to-day.