

ing power of his constitution, and by embarrassing the commissariat department of the microbes by a chemical disinfection of the whole area of the prospective battle-ground.

Nowhere, perhaps, is the idea of "prevention" more apparent than in the field of surgery. In fact, it may be admitted that almost all the recent advances in surgery are owing to our newly-acquired ability to prevent suppuration and inflammation with some degree of certainty, and to bring about the healing of wounds by first intention.

CONTRAST OF SURGERY ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO WITH THAT OF TO-DAY.

To give an idea of the condition of surgery as it existed about one hundred years ago, I quote from Pilcher's interesting work on "The Treatment of Wounds." John Bell, in his delightful discourses on "The Nature and Cure of Wounds" (Edinburgh, 1795), claims that the surgeon "does all his services by observing and managing the properties of the living body, where the living principle is so strong and active in every part that by that energy alone it regenerates the lost substances, or unites in a more immediate way the more simple wounds." "Thirty years ago," he says, "surgeons had no settled notions that cut surfaces might be made to adhere; they had no motive for saving the skin, or where they had saved it they did not know how it should be used, nor how much it might contribute to a speedy cure; if they extirpated a tumor, they cut away along with it all the surrounding skin; if they performed the trepan, they performed in a most regular manner that preliminary operation which they chose to call scalping; or, in plain terms, they cut away six or eight inches of that skin which should have saved the fractured skull from enfoliation, and should have immediately covered and defended the brain; in performing amputation, they cut by one stroke down to the bone, and even when they performed the flap amputation they dressed their stump and flap as distinct sores." The subject upon which discussion ran high in Bell's time was that of procuring the repair of wounds by immediate adhesion.

The French surgeons had declared, not only that their flap operation procured an easy and perfect cure, but they affirmed that often in three days the flesh of such a stump had adhered. To this a contemporary of Bell's, O'Halloran, whom Bell characterizes as an excellent and most judicious surgeon, whose doctrine and practice were followed by all the best surgeons of that day, had replied: "I would ask the most ignorant tyro in our profession whether he ever saw or heard even of a wound, though no more than one inch long, united in so short a time?" adding, "These tales are told with more confidence than veracity; healing by inosculation, by the first intention, by immediate coalescence without suppuration, is merely chimerical, and opposite to the rules of nature."